COMM 3309
Social Media for Public Relations

St. Edward's University • Department of Communication

Section 01 & 02 • Trustee Hall 118 • Spring 2014
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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 1:00-3:00 p.m. & by appointment
Course Blog: academic.stedwards.edu/socialmedia

Required Textbooks:
Briggs, M. (2012). Journalism Next. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

* In addition to the textbook, there will also be a number of journal article and online readings,
  which can be accessed through the course schedule.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In its last issue of 2006, Time Magazine made it official: We, the people, had seized control of the
media, we had become the media, and yes, we mattered now. That year, Time's prestigious "Person
of the Year" award hadn't gone to a Nobel price winner, a head of State, or a generous
philanthropist. Instead, it had been awarded to all of us

> *"[...] for seizing the reins of the global media, for founding and framing the new digital
> democracy, for working for nothing and beating the pros at their own game."*
>
> **http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html*

Participatory platforms such as blogs, YouTube, MySpace, and Wikipedia had introduced a massive
power shift and turned us into an army of content creators. It was truly a revolution, Time Magazine
went on to proclaim. This was the year 2006, when YouTube was still a novelty, when most people
still equated tweeting with birds, and when few fortune 500 CEOs cared to be bothered with the
thought of blogging on behalf of their company. A lot has changed since, but what hasn't changed is
the fact that social media have turned the media landscape upside down and altered the laws of
control of message. The PR industry, which was built on this landscape, had to learn to adapt to this
new reality.

In this course, we will explore emerging social media technologies and study their application in
contemporary PR practice. Technologies we will cover include: blogs, microblogs, collaboration
tools, podcasts, RSS feeds, viral video, social bookmarking, location-based services, mobile
platforms, and other evolving technologies. We will also study how to use such technologies to
monitor conversations on the Internet, engage online communities, identify influencers, establish
thought leadership, optimize content for search engines, and measure performance across social
media platforms.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a result of taking this class, you will:
- ❖ Understand the strategic PR functions social media can perform
- ❖ Understand how social media can be used innovatively to engage audiences.
- ❖ Understand the need to stay abreast of advances in communication technology in order to succeed as a PR professional
- ❖ Learn how to stay up-to-date on emerging trends and developments in social media
- ❖ Learn to create and optimize content for search engines, and create content on topics likely to attract organic search traffic
- ❖ Learn to monitor social media sites and social networks and respond to comments
- ❖ Be able to critically discuss the effects of the use of computer-mediated communication within the corporate and nonprofit environments served by the PR industry

COURSE POLICIES

1. Attendance
Number of absences. Attendance at each class is required. Each time you are absent from class counts as one absence. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be marked absent for that day. After your second absence, your final grade will be reduced by three (3) percentage points for each additional absence. Accruing more than six (6) unexcused absences (including the two (2) free absences you receive) will result in Withdrawal or Failure of the class.

Excused absences. If you have a valid and unavoidable reason for missing class, you may submit a completed *Excused Absence Request* along with a two page (at least 500 words) chapter summary / discussion for the material you missed. Your excused absence request and chapter summary must be turned in within a week after your return to class. The request form is available on Blackboard under Course Documents. A separate request form and additional chapter summary / discussion must be submitted for each absence. You will also need to provide me with proper documentation for your absence (such as a doctor's note, a hospitalization record, a university excuse, or an athletic excuse). All documentation must to be turned in by the last day of class for the excuses to be considered. After review of your request I will determine whether the excuse will be granted.

If you are involved in athletics or another school-sanctioned activity that requires you to miss this class, please give me appropriate supporting material signed by the sponsor. Please underline or highlight the specific dates that involve this class. If changes occur throughout the semester after you have given me a schedule, please keep me updated.

Attendance sheet. After the first week of class, it is your responsibility to sign the roll sheet each class period. Be sure to do so, as this is the official record of your attendance in class.

Withdrawal for absences. I reserve the right to "WA" any student with more than 6 absences. Please note that this does not mean that I will automatically "WA" you if you risk to fail the class. It is your responsibility to initiate drop procedures if you are in danger of failing this class.

2. Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty includes cheating on exams as well as plagiarizing (presenting another's work as your own). Cheating comes in all different shades—ranging from blatant copying off another's exam/bringing a `cheat sheet' to class to more subtle forms of `borrowing' a few ideas and not citing your sources—all of which will be treated with the same level of seriousness in this class. The St. Edward's University Undergraduate Bulletin and the Student Handbook state that a student who is dishonest in any work may receive the maximum penalty of a mark of F for that course. Withdrawal from a course is not allowed when an F in the course for academic dishonesty has been imposed. Students caught committing academic dishonesty in this course will be subject to the full range of penalties as described in the Undergraduate Bulletin and in the Student Handbook.

3. Courtesy Rules regarding Cell Phone and Computer Use

Cell phones: As a courtesy to your teacher and to your classmates, please make sure at the beginning of each class period that your cell phones are silenced. Any texting during class will result in you being counted absent for the day.

Laptops: You may use a laptop to take notes during class. However, in-class laptop usage is restricted to taking notes about this particular class. Writing papers for other classes, surfing the Internet, checking email, visiting Facebook, or other such distractions are prohibited. If you choose to take notes on your computer, you will need to email them to me at the end of class. Each class period I will note who is using a computer to take notes and check the notes at the end of class. Any student who was using a computer but failed to email them to me by the end of class, or added incomplete notes will be counted as absent for that day. Please note that after your second absence, your final grade will be reduced by three percentage points for each additional absence (see attendance policy above).

4. Assignments

All assignments must be turned in on time. Late work will result in a 10% grade reduction for each day (not class period) it is late. Please note that I will **NOT** accept any emailed assignments. If you are absent from class on a day an assignment is due, you are still expected to submit your assignment that day, either by asking a peer to turn it in for you, or by uploading it to Blackboard by the beginning of class. I will use the timestamp on the Blackboard server to determine whether the assignment was handed in on time. Please note that you are responsible for uploading the correct file to the dropbox and making sure the upload was successful. Should you turn in an assignment over Blackboard because of an emergency, it is your responsibility to provide me with a hard copy of the assignment the next class period. Hard copies must be stapled and ready at the beginning of the period.

5. Email Policy

I respond to email once per day, usually in the afternoon, and I will get back with you as soon as possible. Please note that I do not return email over the weekend.

6. Letters of Recommendation

I am happy to write letters of recommendation for students who have performed well in the classes they have taken with me. Before writing letters of recommendation however, I require that you have taken at least two courses with me in which you have performed at the level of B or better. Requests

must be made at least two weeks prior to any submission deadline. Requests should be made via email and provide a recent resume as well as materials regarding the position or scholarship for which you are applying and instructions on how and where to submit the recommendation. Please note that I do not supply open recommendations such as those found on Linked In.

7. Special Accommodations
If you have a medical, psychiatric or learning disability and require accommodations in this class, please let me know early in the semester or as soon as you are eligible. You will first need to provide documentation of your disability to the Student Disability Services Office located in Moody Hall 155 in Academic Planning and Support Services. Please note that special accommodations cannot be made retroactively.

8. Grades
My hope is that you will focus on learning rather than grades in this class. Although a good GPA is admirable, it is by no means the focus of education. A 2007 survey ranked GPA as number 17 of the top 20 qualities employers are looking for. Communication skills were deemed most important! I don't believe there is an "A Student," and that it is my responsibility to maintain your 4.0 GPA, or to make sure you achieve a certain GPA for a scholarship or organization—those responsibilities are yours. That said, if you are not doing as well as you had anticipated, please don't hesitate to come talk to me so that we can discuss how you might improve your performance on the remaining assignments. I am happy to discuss study tips, explain assignments and grading criteria, or simply help you understand key course concepts. What I won't do is negotiate grades. In order to make the grading process more transparent, I share my grading criteria for each assignment with you. If you feel you met all the criteria and received too low a grade, I'll be happy to meet with you to discuss your grade. If you know you didn't meet the criteria, I can't, and won't, change your grade. My goal is to be fair to everyone in the class, which means I will hold everyone to the same standards.

Grading Scale				Course Grade	
A+ = 100	A = 95	A- = 92		A	90-100
B+ = 88	B = 85	B- = 82		B	80-89
C+ = 78	C = 75	C- = 72		C	70-79
D+ = 68	D = 65	D- = 62		D	60-69
F = 50				F	Below 60

ASSIGNMENTS

Technology changes way too quickly for us to focus on specific social media platforms or software applications in this class. Instead, I'd like for us to focus on how to stay abreast of emerging trends and developments in social media. I want you to learn to use social media strategically to connect with experts and professionals in your chosen field. These experts can show you *what* you need to learn in order to keep current in your field and share ideas and resources to help you in that quest. If you walk away from this class having truly grasped how to do this, you are set for a lifetime of independent learning!

Assignment	Weight	Record Your Grade	Multiply by	Total
Weekly Blog Posts	20%		x 2.0	
Conversation Engagement	10%		x 1.0	
Participation/Homework	30%		x 3.0	
Personal Learning Project	40%			
Workshop Goals	5%		x 0.5	
PLN	5%		x 0.5	
PLN Progress Report	5%		x 0.5	
Workshop & Materials	20%		x 2.0	
Reflection	5%		x 0.5	
			Total Points	
			Divide by 1000	

In order to keep track of your grade in this class, record each grade as soon as you receive it. Multiply each grade by the number listed in the "Multiply by" column and record the total. Numeric equivalents for letter grades are listed above (under "Grading Scale"). In order to calculate your final grade at the end of the semester, add up all of your multiplied assignments and divide by 1000. Please note that the matrix above does not take into account absences. In order to determine how your absences will impact your final grade, use the box below:

#Absences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Subtract	0	0	-3	-6	-9	-12	F
Record							

For this assignment, you and your group will work with an organization which would like to learn more about social media and develop a training workshop for them. First, you will need to meet with your client to identify an area of social media they would like to know more about. Some clients may want to learn how to evaluate the success of social media endeavours, others may want to find out how to use social media for fundraising or how to maximize ROI with Google Adwords and Analytics. These are just some examples and your training sessions are by no means limited to these examples. It is important that you find out what your "client" wants to learn and that you tailor your workshop to your client's needs.

At the end of the semester, you will actually hold a training session for the organization you teamed up with. While the final product you will deliver for this project will be the training workshop and the workshop materials, much of the learning will occur along the way. That's why there are a number of graded assignments throughout the semester that will assess your learning and make sure you are on the right track.

PART 1 – THE WORKSHOP GOALS (5% OF FINAL GRADE)
For this part of the assignment, your group will need to identify the topic of your training session, come up with a title for the session and a brief session description outlining the material to be covered in your workshop. You will also need to indicate what section of the workshop each group member is responsible for. Please remember that you will need to meet with your clients to identify their needs before you put together your workshop goals.

PART 2 – THE PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORK (5% OF FINAL GRADE)
My goal for this project is to prepare you for today's highly competitive and rapidly changing workplace by allowing you to develop experience in directing your own learning. Today, knowledge has a very short shelf life, which means that one of the most important skills you can learn while in college is to become an independent learner. To help you develop these independent learning skills, this project encourages you to take your learning outside our classroom and to look beyond our textbook and class discussions for ideas and direction on your workshop. While we will cover a lot of material that may be helpful in putting together a great training session, our class won't cover everything you need to know for your workshop. To teach you all you need to know, you will need to rely on outside experts.

Part 2 of this assignment is designed to teach you how to identify experts on the topic of your training session, how to connect with them, how to share ideas with them, and how to learn from their knowledge. In essence, you will learn to set up your own network of online mentors using social media tools. These mentors will act as your teachers. In this class, we will call this network a **personal learning network.**

Once your workshop goals (part 1) have been approved, each of you will create a personal learning network (PLN) to guide you in your learning. For this part of the project you will identify experts in the area of your training session's topic, connect with them, study the resources they share online and rely on these experts as your personal mentors.

Your personal learning network needs to include a Twitter, blog, and social bookmarking component. I've posted detailed instructions on how to build a personal learning network via Twitter on our course blog (http://academic.stedwards.edu/socialmedia/blog/2009/10/13/you-dont-need-to-tweet-to-get-value-out-of-twitter/). I've also uploaded the class slides on this topic to Blackboard.

Please create a Twitter list using the build-in Twitter list tool to create that component of your PLN. You also need to identify blogs, web sites, and social bookmarks that are relevant to your workshop's topic and subscribe to them. You may even want to subscribe to a Google Alert on your topic (optional). At the end of the semester, you will need to hand in a description of your personal learning network. You need to grow your network throughout the semester, which means that at the end of the semester your network needs to be considerably larger than the network you presented during the progress report (see assignment description below). You'll be evaluated based on the depth and breadth of the personal learning network you built. In order to hand this in, create a list of people you follow on:

- Twitter: list the people in your Twitter PLN with their Twitter UserId. Only list people that pertain to this project (i.e. don't list your buddies here)
- Blogs: list the bloggers you followed for this project. Identify them by a) name, b) blog URL, and c) blog name.
- Social bookmarking sites: list the people you follow on Diigo, Delicious, Pinterest or any other social bookmarking site. Again, only list people you followed for this particular project. List them with their social bookmarking URL.
- Any other social media sites/platforms

PART 3 – THE PLN PROGRESS REPORT (5% OF FINAL GRADE)
For this part of the assignment you will give a 4-5 minute presentation in which you will present the learning network you've created thus far. The point of the presentation is to show us some of the experts you've identified thus far and to provide examples of useful information you've received from them. Please create a separate slide for your Twitter, social bookmarking, and blogging network and include the following information. Please upload your slides to the Blackboard dropbox before class. You'll be evaluated based on the progress made on your PLN by the time of your presentation.

- Twitter network slide
    - How many experts on your project's topic area are you following?
    - List at least 5 of those experts by their Twitter handle and give an example of useful info (related to your project's topic area) each of them has tweeted about.
- Social Bookmarking network slide
    - How many experts on your project's topic area are you following on Diigo, Delicious, Pinterest or another social bookmarking service?
    - List at least 5 of those experts by their Social Bookmarking UserID and give an example of useful info (related to your project's topic area) each of them has bookmarked
- Blogging network slide
    - How many bloggers who are experts on your project's topic area are you subscribing to with your feedreader?
    - List at least 5 of those bloggers (name the title of their blog) and give an

example of useful info (related to your project's topic area) each of them has blogged about.

PART 4 – WORKSHOP & WORKSHOP MATERIALS (20% OF FINAL GRADE)
At the end of the semester your group will host a 75-minute training session for the organization you selected to work with. By then, your personal learning network and your own research and blogging should have allowed you to establish yourself as a credible source on your workshop's topic. For this part of the assignment, you will need to:

- decide on the material to be covered in the training session and divide the workload
- create training materials appropriate for your particular audience
- create engaging visuals that summarize your key points
- deliver the workshop in a professional manner

The detailed grading criteria for part 4 can be found on Blackboard under *Course Documents*.

PART 5 –REFLECTION (5% OF FINAL GRADE)
After you have hosted the training session for your "client," you will write a 2-3 page reflection paper in which you will reflect on the following questions:

- How did your personal learning network help prepare you for this training session? If you don't feel that it has helped much, can you think of a reason for that? If you feel that it has helped, can you provide specific examples?
- How can you use personal learning networks built on social media in the future? In other words, can you think of a situation in which you'd build a similar network for a different project?
- What did you learn from working with a "real-world client"? Was there anything that surprised you? Anything that was frustrating? Something you loved? You can be honest here!

For extra-credit, you can turn your reflection paper into a blog post. To do so, don't just cut and paste the paper into Wordpress. Be sure to add links and multimedia and change the voice from an academic paper voice to a more conversational blogging voice.

BLOGGING PROJECT (20% of your final grade)

In order to get a feel for the social media technologies we will be discussing in this class, you will need to learn how to use all of them first. Since we will be talking a lot about blogs, you will be required to launch your own blog and to post to it throughout the semester. At the end of the course, your blog will document your progress and growth throughout the semester.

You are required to create a blog on the topic you picked for your training session (or a closely related topic) and to blog once a week from week 3 to week 14. For purposes of this assignment, weeks start on Monday and end on Sunday. In your posts you can discuss interesting usages of social media that you stumbled across, or examine new social media technologies – as long as they relate to your blog's overall focus. You can also share your thoughts on how the PR industry is using/should use social media with regards to your topic, or on how communication theories can be applied to social media PR practice in that specific field. As you can tell, pretty much any topic is fair game as long as it pertains to the class and to your blog's focus. The idea is to get you to engage the course material critically and to have you keep your eyes open for interesting material to blog about. I want you to become an active learner and to start being on the lookout for material to incorporate into the class instead of relying on me, as the instructor, to tell you what is important.

Please note that **you will not receive credit for**: posts that were added late, posts that don't relate to social media/PR, or your blog's focus, posts that simply announce a new service/technology without examining it, and/or posts that contain inappropriate language.

Also, remember that your blog reflects your online identity and is indexed by search engines. You don't want to create a negative online identity. Please refer to our discussion of blogging etiquette if you have further questions about this.

Deliverables:
- 1 post a week - it doesn't matter what day of the week you blog.
- Use tags to describe each post and help search engines locate your post
- Link to the sources you use in your post & credit them
- Grow an audience by engaging fellow PR students/practitioners, sharing your posts on other social platforms, and optimizing your social media presence

Grading Criteria:
1. Quality: Posts are substantive (thoroughly developed – roughly 400-600 words)
2. Self-presentation: Post are well written (organization, grammar, spelling)
3. Thought leadership: Posts demonstrate your understanding of the topic/issue
4. Attribution: Posts link to all facts, figures, quotes and statements used
5. Level of engagement: Blog attracted an audience & comments
6. Basic Requirements: Fulfills all the requirements listed above

CONVERSATION ENGAGEMENT (10% of your final grade)

On the social web, commenting is a way to initiate or extend a conversation around a particular topic. You are required to engage at least two online community members a week in a conversation pertaining to the topic of social media and/or PR (and hopefully many, many more). You will need to keep a log of where you commented and who you engaged. I expect you to leave substantive comments that either extend other peoples' arguments, contradict them, or provide some new insight into the topic. Since the point of engaging others in the social media sphere is to grow an audience or network, it is important to comment on a regular basis. Because of that, comments added late will not be counted.

You can comment on your classmates' blogs, the blogs of social media students from classes around the word, the blogs of PR and marketing professionals or people in your PLN, or on posts made on sites such as PROpenMic (www.propenmic.org).

Two notes on comments:
- I expect substance here. No two-word type comments à la "great post", "good job", "I totally agree with you", etc. If you agree/disagree, explain yourself. The goal is to add value to the original post and to deepen the conversation.
- I also expect civility. No intentional provocations/expletives/obscenities, etc. If you disagree with a post, do so politely. Again, the idea is to start a civil, but also critical conversation. We don't all have to agree with one another, but I do expect you to respect one another.

Deliverables:
Please note that it is absolutely essential for you to keep track of where you leave comments and to collect those comments in a log, which you will hand in at the end of the semester. For each comment you leave, your log should contain the:
- name of the site you commented on
- the URL where your comment can be found
- the date of your comment
- the actual comment

Grading Criteria:
1. Quality: Comments are substantive (add value to the post)
2. Level of engagement: Comments initiated further discussion
3. Basic Requirements: Created required amount of comments (2/week)
4. Thoroughness of the log: Comment log contains all the required information (listed above)

PARTICIPATION/HOMEWORK (30% of your final grade)

Your active participation in this class is crucial to your learning. Hence, your participation grade makes up 30% of your final grade. Your participation grade consists of regular homework assignments as well as quizzes on assigned readings, and other activities announced in class. There are no make-ups for in-class assignments.

There are 14 homework assignments, each of which is described in detail on the electronic version of the course schedule. In order to complete your homework you will need to use information presented in your assigned readings. It is therefore important that you read the assigned chapter or online readings before doing your homework. All homework assignments are due at the beginning of class (3:30 p.m. for section 1 and 5 p.m. for section 2). No late homework will be accepted. If you haven't submitted your homework assignment by the beginning of class on the day it is due, you will receive a zero for the assignment. You will be allowed to make up one (1) missed homework assignment throughout the semester.

In addition to these homework assignments, we will have occasional quizzes on assigned readings. These quizzes are designed to encourage you to complete your readings before class.

We may also complete some graded in-class activities from time to time. These activities will be graded on a pass/fail basis.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

JN = Journalism Next; OR = Online Reading

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The Web, the Social Web & New Technologies

Week 1:

Tues. 01/14:	Course Welcome & Introduction	
Thu. 01/16:	Social Web & New Rules of PR	OR
	Quiz on the readings	

Week 2:

Tues. 01/21:	Blogs & Wordpress	JN: ch. 2
	Homework 1: Evaluate other blogs and complete a blog questionnaire	
Thu. 01/23:	RSS review & Blogging Etiquette	JN: ch. 1
	Homework 2: Set up Google Reader	
	Workshop goals due	

Week 3: Blogging & Conversation Engagement Projects begin this week

Tues. 01/28:	Microblogging & Twitter: Twitter Worksheet	JN: ch. 4
	Homework 3: Set up a Twitter account & add Twitter widget to your blog	
Thu. 01/30:	Creating a visual identity for your blog or microblog	JN: ch. 6
	Homework 4: Sketch out your banners & bring pictures for banners to class	

Week 4:

Tues. 02/04:	Finishing banners & Wordpress layout	
Thu. 02/06:	Personal Learning Networks & identifying experts	OR
	Homework 5: Build your Twitter Network	

Week 5:

Tues. 02/11:	Writing in 140 characters - Twitter Scavenger Hunt	OR
	No homework today	
Thu. 02/13:	Twitter for PR	
	*Homework 6***:** Evaluate Twitter accounts	

Principles: Identifying Influencers & Experts

Week 6:

Tues. 02/18: Live-tweeting/blogging & Twitter chats   JN: ch. 5

Homework 7: Find 3 examples of live-tweeting/live-blogging

Thu. 02/20: Social Bookmarks & their uses (In-Class activity: RWW activity on   OR
identifying influencers)
No homework today

Principles: Engaging Online Audiences: Listening, Monitoring & Responding

Week 7:

Tues. 02/25: Monitoring online conversations   OR

Homework 8: Set up Diigo & subscribe to tags/users in Google Reader

Thu. 02/27: Responding to your audience: Case Studies (& SM Audits)   JN: ch. 10
No homework today

Week 8:

Tues. 03/04: *PLN Progress Reports*

Thu. 03/06: No Class – SXSWedu Conference

Week 9:

Tues. 03/11: **NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK**

Thu. 03/13: **NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK**

Principles: Making yourself visible & Growing an Audience

Week 10:

Tues. 03/18: Attention Economy, Search engine visibility, SEO   OR

Homework 9: Get Twitter users to notice you

Thu. 03/20: SEO Workshop: headlines, links, & HTML tags   JN: ch. 11
No homework today

Week 11:

Tues. 03/25: Content Strategy: Content Curation   JN: ch.
No Homework today   3; OR

Thu. 03/27: Content Strategy: Telling Stories with Audio & Video   JN: ch.7 & 8

Homework 10: Deconstructing a video & identifying shots

Week 12:

Tues. 04/01:	Social Media Metrics	OR
	Homework 11: Create a bit.ly link, tweet and track it	
Thu. 04/03:	Metrics Workshop: evaluating your own social media performance	OR
	Homework 12: Set up Google Analytics	

Principles: Measuring Performance & ROI

Week 13:

Tues. 04/08:	Inside the Mind of Google (43 minutes)	
	No homework today	
Thu. 04/10:	The Dark Side of Social Media: Privacy Concerns	OR
	Homework 13: Checking your digital footprint	

Special Topics in Social Media & PR

Week 14:	Blogging & Conversation Engagement Projects end this week	
Tues. 04/15:	Social Media News Releases & Optimized Releases	OR
	Homework 14: Reflection on your own digital identity	
Thu. 04/17:	**NO CLASS: EASTER BREAK**	

Week 15:

Tues. 04/22:	*Workshop*
Thu. 04/24:	*Workshop*

Week 16:

Tues. 04/29:	*Workshop*
Thu. 05/01:	*Workshop*
	Reflection and extra-credit due