

Social Media & Society

JRSM 4710 M50

Spring 2026

Online Asynchronous

Jasper Fessmann, PhD

Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 10.00 - 12.30 PM

If you'd like to meet for the office hours listed, please reach out via email so I can send you a Teams link. I'm very responsive to emails!

Email: jcfssmann@memphis.edu

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

Discussion of social media's impact on individuals, organizations, and society. Examines the fundamentals of social media-based community, diversity, and influence. Includes broad understanding of a variety of platforms and trends and their place and importance in the social media ecosystem.

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Luttrell, R., & Wallace, A. *Social Media & Society: An Introduction to the Mass Media Landscape (2021)*.

Classroom format

This course is delivered online in an asynchronous format. In other words, there is no required scheduled meeting time for this course. This can be convenient for students juggling several responsibilities, but it also means you must be organized and motivated. Students are able to work at their own pace throughout the week, however work will be due on a weekly basis and it is imperative to stay on track with the course schedule to complete all deadlines on time.

This semester, we'll be discussing how social media impacts our society - how we get our news, how businesses communicate, politics, entertainment, activism, interpersonal relationships, and more. In order to do this, we'll rely on thoughtful class discussions, lectures, slide decks, activities, and assignments. Your learning will be assessed through discussions, activities,

assignments, quizzes, and a story put together by you bringing together different perspectives on how social media makes a daily impact on our lives.

All correspondence regarding the class needs to be addressed to jcfssmnn@memphis.edu. Please **include in any email the class designation JRSM 4710 so that I know which class you are writing about**. During weekdays I will usually respond to emails within 24-48 hours. If you have not received an answer after two days, please resend the email with a note that you are resending it. I will not respond on weekends but will address the concerns the following Monday.

All individual assignments will be due Sunday nights at 11:59 p.m. central time unless otherwise noted. To allow time for response and clarification, please reach out with any assignment questions at least 48 hours prior to the deadline.

All course discussions should remain respectful and professional, and show respect to all people regardless of background, sex, race, gender or any other factor. Hate speech will not be tolerated in any form and could result in a zero on an assignment or dropped from the class for misconduct. Students will sometimes have different perspectives in this class, and that's okay. I encourage thoughtful debate and discussion, as long as it remains respectful, open-minded and professional.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page:
<http://memphis.instructure.com>
1. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
1. Click on the link for JRSM 4710 to enter our course

Course Requirements

This course will require access to technology, diligence in engaging with each week's course content, bringing forward thoughtful discussion, application of course material to real world examples, and communication with the instructor and other classmates. Discussions should always remain respectful, supportive, and open to hearing differing perspectives or ideas.

Course & Campus Resources

Students with disabilities & accommodations

If you will need accommodations through [Disability Resources](#) to meet any of the requirements of this course, please let me know as soon as possible. I'm happy to work with you to make sure you are able to be successful in this course. Remember, this is not a reflection on your ability

nor is it giving special treatment, but rather making sure you are equipped to do your best in this course.

Support: If at any point in the semester you are struggling with the course load or a specific assignment, please reach out to me via email so we can discuss opportunities for getting you back on track. I'm always happy to help and answer questions, but it requires students to reach out and take the first step.

Meeman Lab Availability: Open labs 9:30-4:30 Monday-Friday. In addition to Meeman, labs are available in the Tech Hub and the Library.

For students that may not have access to a computer, the McWherter Library has laptops on loan. Please visit the Checkout desk in the library or visit: <https://www.memphis.edu/libraries/technology/laptop.php>

Campus and Community Resources: <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/>

Resources specific to physical health and wellness:

[Mental health Services](#)

[UofM Student Health Center](#)

[Sexual, domestic, and intimate partner violence resources](#)

If you are affected financially because of COVID-19:

There are many resources available through the Dean of Students including:

[Dr. Rosie Phillips Bingham Student Emergency Fund](#)

[Emergency Food Resources](#), which includes [Tiger Pantry](#)

Academic Services:

[Writing Center](#)

[Tutoring](#)

Communities & Inclusion:

[Multicultural Affairs](#)

Grading

There are 1,000 possible points in this class. At the end of the semester, your class points will be calculated and rounded up to the nearest whole number. Letter grades will be determined

according to the scale below. If additional points are added or subtracted from this possible point total, students will be provided with an updated point to letter grade scale.

A+ = 967 – 1,000 points, **A** = 934 – 966, **A-** = 900 – 933 points

B+ = 867 – 899 points, **B** = 834 – 866 points, **B-** = 800 – 833 points

C+ = 767 – 799 points, **C** = 734 – 766 points, **C-** = 700 – 733 points

D = 667 – 600 points

F = 600 and fewer points

Grading Philosophy. **A**=Professional quality work that could be use with little or no modification

B=Good to excellent work and exceeds requirement, but would require revision to be used professionally

C=Satisfactory work and adequately meets requirement, but would need significant revision

D=Barely satisfies minimum requirement and below average quality

F=Unsatisfactory work and does not meet minimum requirements

Assignments

Quizzes, Midterm & Final, **225 points**

Discussions, **250 points**

Individual Assignments, **225 points**

Impact Report, **300 points**

Total: 1,000 points

Assignment Breakdown

More in-depth guidelines posted to Canvas.

Discussions: The values-based aspect of this course makes course discussions absolutely imperative. Students will participate in the discussion boards to reference examples and current events and get a deeper understanding of course material. Discussion will allow students to understand different viewpoints and roles of social media and how theories are relevant to real-world concepts and strategies.

Discussions will be posted almost weekly to the discussion board on Canvas with a prompt. Students are expected to engage with any linked media/readings prior to responding to the prompt and then make their own original discussion post. Then, to receive full credit for the discussion, students must respond to *at least* two classmates.

The whole point of a discussion question is to discuss. As such, original posts should thoroughly explore the topic at hand and give reasoning for your viewpoint. Replies should build on, challenge or explore the perspectives given by your classmates. Simply responding “I agree”, “I disagree”, or “Good post!” won’t count as a reply/receive credit.

Quizzes & Exams: Quizzes will be completed every couple of weeks to make sure you are keeping up with the course content, as well as one midterm and one final that will be comprehensive. While you are welcome to use your notes or textbooks if you are drawing a blank on something (it happens to the best of us), you will need to make sure you are connecting with the course material as the quizzes/exams will be timed and it will be impossible to look up every answer. You will have a total of two attempts for each quiz and exam. You are permitted from working with another student on the quizzes, and doing so will result in an automatic zero on the quiz and warning. If it happens a second time, you could be dropped from the course. All quizzes and exams will be completed through Canvas. Quizzes will be semester and demonstrate your strong storytelling abilities, you will be required to complete a social media impact report. In order to complete the report, you will be required to interview six different people on issues pertaining to social media and society. Once you’ve conducted your interviews, you will use your journalistic abilities to create a report that makes a case about social media’s impact on our society.

The report can be delivered through a variety of different methods: A traditional paper/story, a video, podcast, slide deck, or other multimedia channel. worth 25 points each, and exams will be worth 50 points each.

Social Media Impact Report: In order to demonstrate both what you’ve learned in class over the

Reports will be graded on the diversity of interviews you completed, how well you were able to tell an overall story/demonstrate your position, overall professionalism, creativity, and quality. More details will be provided in class and on Canvas.

Individual Assignments: Students will work independently on a few assignments in order to demonstrate understanding of course concepts and social media as a whole. Additional details will be provided on Canvas.

Course and Assignment Expectations

Course work will be accomplished every week, including readings, assignments and quizzes to check your learning and comprehension. Each assignment must be completed by its due date and time (Central Time), which may vary by assignment, so make sure to check each individual due date and time to ensure that you post by the deadline.

Quality of Work

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar, and language. A large part of strategic media is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. This includes all class work and presentations. Problems in these or other areas will result in the deduction of points.

I expect your work to be good and original, meaning it's yours. If you quote anything or get information from any other source, it should be fully cited. If you need help with writing and citing sources, please see me for resources.

Chat GPT / AI

You must obtain permission from the instructor before using ChatGPT or other AI tools to assist with assignments in this course. Once permission is granted, AI may only be used as directed.

Assignment submissions may run through AI detection software. Unauthorized use may result in a failing grade or a request to resubmit an assignment. Be prepared to submit any prompts you used for assistance with your assignment as well as the original ChatGPT output and to be able to explain/show how you fact-checked and improved upon the AI's work.

Repetition of Courses and Coursework

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the resume and logo).

Questions about Grades

If you would like to ask about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me outside of class time, as I will not discuss grades via email or during class.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your grade and meeting with me early in the semester if you are concerned about your overall grade. Meeting early and often can help both parties involved find ways to improve student-instructor understanding and quality of work.

Plagiarism & Unauthorized AI use policy

First offense: Redo for 50%, warning *Second offense:* Automatic 0, no redo *Third offense:* Automatic class fail

Final assignment, regardless of which offense: Automatic 0 on assignment

**Any instances of plagiarism may result in a note being added to your department file

Late Work: In the fields of public relations and journalism, deadlines are imperative. As such, learning to work within deadlines for this course will be expected. In class activities/discussions cannot be made up, and surveys, quizzes, and the exams will not be accepted late. Individual assignments will accepted with the following policy:

<24 hours late: 5% off

<48 hours late: 10% off

<One week late: 20% off

One to three weeks late: 30% off

Over three weeks late: No credit

Discussions: A huge part of this course is discussing concepts with classmates in order to think more deeply about the topics at hand. To make sure that students are each sharing their authentic responses to the prompts without self-editing based on what the class is saying, you will be required to make an original post prior to being able to see/respond to any other posts for the week.

Additionally, a big part of your discussion grade will not only be making an original post, but also reply thoughtfully to *at least* two classmates (more would be better!) Your responses must be thoughtful and add to the conversation - simply saying you agree or “good post” will not receive credit. Think about what your classmates are saying and consider how you can respond in a way that furthers exploration of the topic.

In order to make sure discussions are productive and thoughtful, please post your original post earlier in the week (Thursday or prior) so that everyone has a few days to reply. Consistently waiting until the deadline to post will result in a deduction of points.

Course Schedule

Week 1, January 19-25: Welcome to the course

Readings/Media: None, get your textbook 😊

Assignments: Introduction discussion

Week 2, January 26 - February 1: Social media definitions

Readings/Media: Chapters Two & Three, See Canvas

Assignments: Social media platform research assignment

Social media definitions and usage discussion

Week 3, February 2-8: Social media pros and cons

Readings/Media: See Canvas for articles

Assignments: Discussion on platforms and articles

Deep fake, AI, propaganda & misinformation assignment

Quiz 1

Week 4, February 9-15: Social media & politics

Readings/Media: Chapter Eight

Assignments: Impact report pitch

Discussion on politics

Week 5, February 16-22: Social media & journalism

Readings/Media: Chapter four

See Canvas for articles/podcasts

Assignments: Discussion on agenda setting and current events

Quiz 2

Week 6, February 23 - March 1: Social media & journalism

Readings/Media: See Canvas for articles

Assignments: News story / journalist assignment

Discussion on journalism and interpretations

Week 7, March 2-8: Midway check ins

Readings/Media: None

Assignments: Midterm *due Friday night, October 11*

Discussion - workshopping the impact report *due Friday night, October 11*

Fall break begins Saturday, October 12.

Week 8, March 9-15: Spring Break

Readings/Media: None

Assignments: None required

Week 9, March 16-22: Social media + activism

Readings/Media: See Canvas

Assignments: Discussion - social movements and online support

Week 10, March 23-29: Social media & businesses, economic impact

Readings/Media: Chapter five

Assignments: Discussion on how businesses have changed their approaches with social

Week 11, March 30 - April 5: Social media and organizations - crisis and relationship building

Readings/Media: Chapter six, see Canvas for articles

Assignments: Discussion on organizational best practices

Organizational/commercial social prowess assignment

Quiz 3

Week 12, April 6-12: Social media & interpersonal relationships

Readings/Media: See Canvas

Assignments: Consequences of social on socialization reflection

Discussion: Special election week edition

Week 13, April 13-19:: Social media & entertainment + sports

Readings/Media: Chapters 7 & 10

Assignment: Discussion question on entertainment, interactions & interpersonal relationships

Quiz 4

Week 14, April 20-26: Impact report due

Readings/Media: None

Assignments: Impact report due

Week 14: April 27-May 3: Course wrap up

Readings/Media: None

Assignments: Final Reflection

Final Exam

Course schedule may change based on needs of the course.

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Professional Values and Competencies in JRSM 4710

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, both in a global context and in the United States.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

How professional values and competencies will be met

Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)

- Learn about how the myriad uses and presentations of images and information shift in a new media landscape.
- Develop an understanding of the variety of tools and technologies available in social media.
- Hone written and verbal communication skills with a variety of content productions.
- Apply knowledge of best practices and core values of journalism, public relations, advertising and creative mass media.
- Learn about the ethical implications of social media use, such as concerns surrounding privacy.

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)

- Interact with other students, professors, and professionals worldwide to enhance understanding of the collaborative power of social media.
- Thorough and supported contributions to class discussion.
- Read and critically reflect on contemporary texts that explore and highlight how social media are changing the use and presentation of images and information.
- Understand the importance of diversity on social media, and ways in which that can be improved or enhanced.
- Craft their own version of different types of social media content.

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness

- Grow awareness of the variety of social media tools and technologies.
- Articulate and appraise ethical concerns on social media.
- Acknowledge how social media builds, sustains, and dismantles different versions of community.

Understanding

- Express interest in the process of creating content.
- Distinguish between different platforms and channels, and when each is most appropriate to use given a particular audience.
- Explore the reality that not everyone is online or engaged with social media, and the impact that has on using it for messaging.
- Delve into issues of diversity and inclusion, using statistical knowledge to support arguments and suggestions for improvement.

Application

- Creation of multiple types of content, including written, audio, and video, for a variety of social media platforms.
- Recognize the role of social media in the creation, production, and reaction to the news.
- Develop skills in a specific platform that allows for overseeing social media content creation.

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

Portfolio requirement

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or SquareSpace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to use the portfolio long term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

Email

You must have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have all UofM emails forwarded to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

AI/Chat GPT

The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to specific guidelines for this course in the course- specific part of the syllabus.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. Substantially reworking the

original submission, or working with the same general idea, may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

Academic integrity

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. If you need more information about the University policy on academic integrity visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#).

In addition to University-wide policies, the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on your own, as acts of cheating and punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair.

Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas and to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

Online SETEs

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the "Student Pages" dropdown menu and select "My Resources" and find the SETE evaluation forms; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few

minutes. Faculty take the evaluations seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Diversity and inclusivity

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. Some of these forms include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to participate in fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are carried out through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such, faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional at all times.

Weather policy

Always check with local media, the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather.

Student support

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help:

<https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.