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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interactive course explores social media from the perspectives of information analysis and community building. Students will learn the theory and practice of civic engagement and community building through social media. Ideally suited for individuals interested in working with nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, healthcare and nursing, community health, arts and humanities, government, and remote or rural communities. Utilizing a service learning approach, students will engage in the theories and methods related to social media community building through both in-class discussion and community outreach.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Explain the historical development and definitions of social media
- Critically evaluate information exchanged via social media
- Define the ethical and privacy dimensions of social media
- Apply theories of media and politics for designing ethical spaces of social media engagement
- Create and implement practical applications of social media for real-world community and civic engagement

REQUIRED TEXTS

There is no required text to purchase. Our course readings will be provided through the syllabus, and are subject to change as the semester progresses.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

The class will be a community-focused cooperative learning experience, so discussion participation is central to the work of the course. In order for the class to work together as a community, it is important that you read the assigned work for each week's class. You are responsible to yourself and your classmates to prepare for discussion by reading and carefully considering the assigned articles each week. You and your work are, in a very real way, the primary texts for this course. If you can't finish the assigned work for any reason, please discuss this with us in advance so that we can find a solution together. We will also create an online discussion area on slack.com that will allow us to communicate between class periods: lsci491.slack.com. Communication channels to use:

- Submit assignments to folders on D2L
- Communicate with classmates through D2L email or slack channel
- Communicate with course instructors through D2L email, direct email (contact information above), or Twitter (contact information above)

OFFICE HOURS

We are available for to meet during our regularly-scheduled office hours (Thursdays, 9am-10:30am) or by special appointment, if scheduled in advance. We're always happy to meet with you to discuss the course or just to chat. This is the most effective way for us to give you individual attention and get to know you better. We encourage you to meet with us as early in the semester as possible, especially if you have any particular questions or concerns. We're also very easy to reach by email and Twitter. You can send questions or comments to Scott at swyoung@montana.edu (@hei_scott) and Doralyn at doralyn@montana.edu (@doralyn)

COURSE FAQ

What will this class be like?
- Social media facilitates conversation within a community, and we will attempt to model that with our class.
- We will work together through three main themes of the semester. Each theme is based around related social media topics, and features 2-4 weeks of theory discussion and 1 week of hands-on practice-based work.
- The two faculty, Scott and Doralyn, will take alternating leads by course unit (see below for week-by-week breakdown).
- Grading will involve self-assessment and peer-assessment (more on that below).
- Ambiguity in the class is not a failure, but a feature. We will work through any uncertainty together as teachers and students.

What will the workload be?
- We will try to address each reading during our class discussion. Please come prepared!
- 3 in-semester projects leading to a final project.
- A mid-semester self-evaluation and a final self-evaluation.

THE WORK OF THE COURSE

This course focuses on the theoretical concepts and practical applications of social media community building. We will explore the theoretical component of the course through weekly readings and in-class discussion, and we will develop the practical component through a series of community-focused projects. Each unit of the course will be framed by a number of guiding questions that will in turn be illuminated by readings and in-class discussion. There are 4 projects in the course. The first 3 projects will help provide an in-practice application for the readings and discussion, while the final project will be a culmination of the course's theory and practice work. At the beginning of the semester, you will sort into Project groups of around 5 students, based on your major or area of interest. This group will function as a working group for the project assignments. We will also sort you into separate discussion groups that will change throughout the semester according to the discussion themes (listed below). The week-by-week readings and project assignments are described below. As the semester progresses, the readings may change in response to your interests and to current events. If we update the readings, we will also issue a new syllabus with an updated version date listed at the top.

Theme 1: The Platform

➔ Introductions and history of the landscape (Aug 30-Sep 1)

➔ Faculty Lead: Scott

   ◆ Guiding Questions
      ● What is social media and can we arrive at a community definition?
      ● How many social media platforms can be identified?
   ◆ Instructions for Tuesday, August 30
      ● Introductions
      ● Syllabus overview
      ● Social media brainstorming
   ◆ Readings for Thursday, September 1
      ● It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens, Introduction
      ● Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship
      ● Pew Internet statistics
         ○ Social Media Usage: 2005-2015

- - - Social Networking Fact Sheet
  - ● MSU Library Social Media Survey
    - ○ 2013
    - ○ 2014
- ◆ Outcome
  - ● Explain the historical development and definitions of social media.

➔ Information Sharing and Description Today (Sep 6-8)

➔ Faculty Lead: Doralyn

- ◆ Guiding Questions
  - ● How do Snap Stories, Facebook Trending Topics, and Twitter Moments shape our understanding of current events?
  - ● What are the various types and contexts of communication on social media: gifs, memes, quotes?
  - ● If personal data is shared with the government via social media platforms, why might that be problematic?
  - ● How do content algorithms and advertising determine our information production and consumption?
  - ● Which media companies own which social media platforms? Who benefits from these arrangements?
  - ● How is advertising integrated into social media?
  - ● How do we learn from social media?
- ◆ Readings for Tuesday, September 6
  - ● News Use Across Social Media Platforms, 2016
  - ● Students and Social News: How College Students Share News Through Social Media
- ◆ Readings for Thursday, September 8
  - ● Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook
  - ● Political News in the News Feed: Learning Politics from Social Media
  - ● The Real Bias Built In at Facebook
- ◆ Outcome
  - ● Critically evaluate information exchanged via social media

➔ Project 1: "Get to know your social network." Platform Analysis - Historical Development of social media networks (Sep 13-15)

- ◆ Reading for Tuesday, September 13
  - ● How Trolls are Ruining the Internet
  - ● Review of this Tweet

- In-class discussion: Role of online community manager and facilitating productive behavior and & community building. Consideration of platforms.
◆ Activities for Thursday, September 15: Project 1 due by 10:49am
- Please submit projects through D2L prior to the start of class, and come to class ready to review and discuss your project.
◆ Outcome
- Each group will create a report that other students will refer to later in the class, e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat. Instructions for Project 1 will be distributed by September 1.

Theme 2: The Self

➔ Identity, Ethics, and Privacy (Sep 20-Oct 4)

➔ Faculty Lead: Scott

◆ Guiding Questions
- How do the characteristics of the platforms condition our behavior?
- How does a communication medium direct the formation and expression of identity?
- How does an organization express its identity on social media in contrast to an individual?
- How are privacy and consent structured?

◆ Readings for Tuesday, September 20
- It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens, Chapter 1: Identity
- All the World Wide Web's a stage: The performance of identity in online social networks

◆ Readings for Thursday, September 22
- Reacting to Reactions
- Masked and Anonymous

◆ Readings for Tuesday, September 27
- It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens, Chapter 2: Privacy
- Data Ethics Case Study
- Facebook ad preferences
- Mark Zuckerberg, Let Me Pay for Facebook

◆ Readings for Thursday, September 29
- The IRL Fetish
- Face to Interface
- This photo

◆ Readings for Tuesday, October 4
- Point: Sherry Turkle's 'Reclaiming Conversation'

- - Counterpoint: <u>Fear of Screens</u>
    - ◆ Outcome
      - Define the ethical and privacy dimensions of social media

- ➔ Project 2: Op-Ed Piece (Oct 6)

  - ◆ Activity for Thursday, October 6: Project 2 due by 10:49am
    - Please submit projects through D2L prior to the start of class, and come to class ready to review and discuss your project.
  - ◆ Outcome
    - Compose an op-ed piece in the style of a NY Times column that explores a dimension of social media identity and ethics (backed up with references to other writing). Instructions for Project 2 will be distributed by September 22.

Theme 3: The Community

➔ Social and community engagement (Oct 11-20)

➔ Faculty Lead: Doralyn

- ◆ Guiding Questions
  - How are power structures made and reinforced online?
  - How do you engage with differing viewpoints online?
  - How do you manage your online persona and your "real-life" beliefs?
  - Is your online friend group a community? Why or why not? What is the shape and boundary lines of your community?
- ◆ Instructions for Tuesday, October 11
  - Please submit Project 2 Peer Evaluations through D2L prior to the start of class.
  - Read: <u>Online Self-Presentation on Facebook and Self Development During the College Transition</u>
- ◆ Readings for Thursday, October 13
  - <u>Understanding New Power</u>
  - <u>How Zayn Malik is Changing the Power Dynamics with a Retweet</u>
- ◆ Readings for Tuesday, October 18
  - <u>Pruning the news feed: Unfriending and unfollowing political content on social media</u>

- Inside Facebook's (Totally Insane, Unintentionally Gigantic, Hyperpartisan) Political-Media Machine
◆ Assignment for Wednesday, October 19
  - Submit Midterm Self-evaluation through D2L by 11:59pm
◆ Readings for Thursday, October 20
  - Unfollow: How a prized daughter of the Westboro Baptist Church came to question its beliefs (if overwhelmed by article's length, consider watching a brief video interview)
◆ Outcome
  - Apply theories of media and politics for designing ethical spaces of social media engagement

➔ Practical applications and methods (Oct 25-Nov 10)

➔ Faculty Lead: Scott

◆ Guiding Questions
  - How can media theory and social theory form a guiding foundation for social media practice?
  - What is the character of engaging posts for individuals and organizations?
  - What are the strategies that nonprofits can apply for building community through social media?
◆ Readings for Tuesday, October 25
  - The Star Wars social networks – who is the central character?
  - How To Visualize Your Facebook Network
◆ Readings for Thursday, October 27
  - Visualization activity continued
  - Information, Community, and Action: How Nonprofit Organizations Use Social Media
◆ Readings for Tuesday, November 1
  - Social Media for Nonprofits - Video
  - Using Social Media to Build Community
◆ Readings for Thursday, November 3
  - Top 10 U.S. Municipal Police Departments and Their Social Media Usage
◆ Instructions for Tuesday, November 8
  - No class — Election Day
◆ Instructions for Thursday, November 10
  - No class -> you are encouraged to meet with your group and plan your final project
◆ Outcome
  - Create and implement practical applications of social media for real-world community and civic engagement

➔ Social Media Campaigns, Advertising, & Analytics (Nov 15-Nov 24)

➔ Faculty Lead: Doralyn

◆ Guiding Questions
  ● How can we design an effective hashtag & Twitter campaign?
  ● How can we design an effective advertising campaign?
  ● How can we use web analytics to inform our social media activity?
◆ Readings for Tuesday, November 15
  ● A Day in the Life: Livetweeting as a Professional Tool
  ● Using social media to raise money (3-minute video tutorial)
◆ Readings for Thursday, November 17
  ● Your Mileage May Vary: Facebook Advertising Revisited
  ● (Plus an overview of social media analytics by Doralyn and Scott)
◆ Instructions for Tuesday, November 22
  ● Open discussion and final project planning
◆ Instructions for Thursday, November 24
  ● No class — Thanksgiving
◆ Outcome
  ● Create and implement practical applications of social media for real-world community and civic engagement

➔ Project 3: Community Analysis - Draft Strategy (Nov 29-Dec 1)

◆ Activities for Tuesday, November 29
  ● Open discussion and final project planning
  ● Reading: How Fake News Goes Viral: A Case Study
  ● Reading: Facebook's failure: did fake news and polarized politics get Trump elected?
  ● Reading: Evaluating Information on Social Media
◆ Activities for Thursday, December 1: Project 3 due by 10:49am
  ● Please submit projects through D2L prior to the start of class, and come to class ready to review and discuss your project.
◆ Outcome
  ● Working draft of a social media strategy for a local non-profit. Instructions for Project 3 and the Final Project will be distributed by November 3.

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Final Project: The Strategy

➜ Synthesized and Refined strategy (Dec 6-Dec 8)

- ◆ Activities for Tuesday, December 6
  - Refine social media strategy
- ◆ Activities for Thursday, December 8
  - Final project review and class wrap-up.
- ◆ Assignment for Sunday, December 11
  - Submit final project through D2L by 11:59pm
- ◆ Assignment for Thursday, December 15
  - Submit final self-evaluation through D2L by 11:59pm
- ◆ Outcome
  - Final draft of a social media strategy for a local non-profit.

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GRADING

For this class, you will make a recommendation to us for your final grade (A, B, or C, with lower grades at our discretion), based on the completion of certain conditions outlined below. While we will assign final grades (as officially required), you will evaluate your own work throughout the course.

We will ask you to meet with us individually during the month of September for approximately 10-15 minutes to define personal learning goals that will serve as general guides through the semester.

At the middle of the term, you will write a midterm self-evaluation that reflects on your work and contributions throughout the course. You will complete a similar self-evaluation at the end of the term. The self-evaluations are intended to serve as helpful reflective exercises in which you document your process and overall progress. The self-evaluations will not only inform our own evaluation of yourself, but will inform how we adjust the course itself as we progress together.

Throughout the course we will not be putting letter or number grades on individual assignments. We will add questions and comments that engage with your work. You will also be reflecting carefully on your own work and engaging thoughtfully with the work of your peers. The intention here is to create a more open and organic learning experience rather than a prescriptive grade-driven experience. If

this process causes more anxiety than it alleviates, contact us at any point to confer about your performance in the course to date. If you are worried about your grade, your best approach will be to join the discussions, do the reading, and complete the projects with sincere interest. You should consider this course a "busy-work-free zone." If an assignment does not feel productive, we can find ways to modify, remix, or repurpose the instructions.

Grade Conditions

An "A" Grade

- Miss a maximum of one class
- Participate with good faith and generosity in all discussions
- Complete all three projects on time
- Complete the midterm and final self-evaluation with sincere self-reflection and thorough familiarity with course readings and discussions
- Complete a final project that both demonstrates familiarity with class discussions and readings and shows that you've learned the practical applications of social media community building
- Meet with us individually to establish a personal learning goal
- Meet with one or both of us at least once over the course of the semester—in addition to your personal learning goal meeting—to discuss your performance in the class, areas of improvement, and any questions you may have

A "B" Grade

- Miss a maximum of two classes
- Participate with good faith and generosity in all discussions
- Complete all three projects, and submit at least two on time
- Complete the midterm and final self-evaluation with sincere self-reflection and thorough familiarity with course readings and discussions
- Complete a final project that both demonstrates familiarity with class discussions and readings and shows that you've learned the practical applications of social media community building
- Meet with us individually to establish a personal learning goal

A "C" Grade

- Miss a maximum of three classes
- Participate with good faith and generosity in most discussions
- Complete the midterm and final self-evaluation
- Complete all three projects, and submit at least two on time
- Complete a final project that demonstrates familiarity with most class discussions and readings and shows that you've learned the practical applications of social media community building
- Meet with us individually to establish a personal learning goal

Midterm Self-evaluation

Due: Submitted through D2L to us by 11:59pm on Sunday, October 16, 2016

Instructions: Compose an email to us with answers to each of the following questions. No need to use an attachment. Just write or cut and paste your answers directly into the document. You are welcome to approach this self-evaluation either as a series of answers to each of these questions or as a less formal letter to us about the course and your work.

1. Evaluate your participation during in-class discussion. How would you characterize your involvement in our discussions so far? What are your strengths and weaknesses in this regard? Have you read and thought through the readings? What could have used more work? How has your thinking evolved from one week to the next? Feel free to use this rubric to help assess your own work.

2. Have you completed all assigned work for the course?

3. What letter grade would you give yourself for the first half of this course and why? Consider preparedness, the strength of your written work, your participation in discussion, and your goals for the semester.

4. How is this course meeting your personal learning goals?

5. (Optional, but encouraged): What questions do you have for us at this point? About the subjects of the class? About your work/progress this semester? Are there any aspects of your work that you would particularly like feedback on?

Final Self-evaluation

Due: Submitted through D2L to us by 11:59pm on Thursday, December 15, 2016

Instructions: Compose an email to us with answers to each of the following questions. No need to use an attachment. Just write or cut and paste your answers directly into the e-mail. The questions here are less prescriptive than on the midterm self-evaluation, in order to give you the opportunity to reflect on the course in a way that feels appropriate to you.

1. Write a short evaluation of your performance in this class (250-500 words), addressing the following sorts of questions: Were you prepared for each class week? Did you do all of the required readings and projects? How would you characterize your overall effort, interest, and commitment to the class? Did your engagement increase or decrease as the semester went along? How did you meet the goals for the course?

2. Write a brief description (about 100 words) of the social media skills and concepts that you gained or built upon as a result of this class. Are there social media skills that you still want to gain beyond what the class provided?

3. We would like to know a bit about your experience building community with your classmates. Please reflect on our shared experience together (about 200 words): did the structure of this class and our approach to dialogue and discussion help build community connections with your classmates? If yes, please tell us why. If not, let us know that too.

4. What letter grade would you give yourself for the semester and why? Consider preparedness for class, the strength of your written work, and your participation in discussions.

DISABILITY

We wish to make this class accessible to all. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please contact us or Disabled Student Services.

UNIVERSITY CONDUCT POLICIES

This course will adhere to the [MSU Conduct Guidelines](#).