



SYLLABUS

Social Media for Journalists
Instructor: Damian Radcliffe
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Language of Instruction: English
UO Credits: 4
Contact Hours: 40

London, UK, Summer 2018

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social Media has changed the way that both journalists - and audiences - find and share the news. How are these changes affecting journalistic practice? And what are the social media skills that journalists need today?

This class will explore the social media strategies of major news media outlets and journalists, exploring different social platforms and how to use them effectively. It will also teach you how to use social media to verify and manage content from different sources, as well as explore best practice in develop relationships with communities through online channels.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Strong social media skills are highly sought after by employers. But usage of these platforms in your personal life don't necessarily translate into effective use in a professional, journalistic setting.

Aims

This course will redress that by improving your knowledge of how major social networks are being used by audiences, journalists and news publishers (primarily in the US and the UK, but also in emerging markets such as SE Asia). Questions that we will explore include:

- What is the role of social media in the way that audiences find, consume and share news today?
- What are the implications of this for news organizations?
- How are they responding to these challenges?
- What are the characteristics of different social platforms and what does this mean for storytelling?
- How are different platforms used by news organizations to tell stories?
- What impact does social media have on the role of journalists in 2018?
- How is that role changing?

At the end of this course, you will have a firm grasp of these key issues, as well as the ability to tell your own stories through social media.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course you will be able to:

1. Understand and describe some of the major trends in social media usage.
2. Describe characteristics of major social platforms; including best practice for them.
3. Know where to look for relevant industry information/data/analysis about social media.
4. Use industry standard tools, such as Google Drive and Medium, for collaborative and individual work.
5. Have a working knowledge of the following 8 social networks / types of channels:
 - *Facebook*
 - *Twitter*
 - *Instagram*
 - *Snapchat*
 - *Tumblr*
 - *Pinterest*
 - *Live Video services such as YouTube Live, Periscope and Facebook Live*
 - *Messaging based apps like WeChat, WhatsApp and Line*
6. Be able to critique your own ideas/output – and those of your peers – on social media topics.
7. Understand the implications of your digital – and social – footprint.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

This course will blend classroom lectures and discussion, guest speakers, practical exercises and fieldwork with your own reading and research.

You will be expected to critically consume social news (news stories told on social media platforms) throughout the course and to consistently share the findings with the class. Given how fast the social media landscape changes - and the sheer breadth of this space – each student will play a key role in helping their peers to develop their own knowledge of this rapidly evolving environment.

Learning methods will include:

- **Discussing** key market data and trends, developing your understanding of their implications.
- **Researching and analysing** emerging issues and players.
- **Presenting** your own research and social media output to your class peers and instructor.
- **Writing high quality journalistic work**, both in-class and in your own time.
- **Publishing** your work on a public facing class website/blog.

Four pieces of output are required from students taking this course, alongside regular contributions to the class blog.

Those pieces are:

1. **Written analysis of how a mainstream news media organization uses social media.**

Over a one week period, you will live and breathe the social media output produced by a major player in the modern journalism field. You can either consume their content in a general sense, or focused on a specific story or vertical (e.g. sports, politics, health).

At the end of that week, you will write an 700-900 word article describing what they did, how they did it and how effective you thought this was. Write as if your analysis was going to be published on a professional website such as the BBC Academy, journalism.co.uk, MediaShift or another “How To” publications used by journalists on both sides of the pond.

Your analysis should include hyperlinks, screenshots, embedded tweets/images/videos etc. to help tell the story.

After grading, you will have the opportunity to make some revisions, before submitting this to the class blog for wider consumption.

2. **Social Media User Guide**

Working in pairs, you will be allocated a social network that you will become the class experts in. Together you and your partner will produce a “User Guide” for this social channel.

To help develop your expertise in this space, you will use a mixture of desk analysis and field research to determine best practice for this platform. Field research will include reporting on a story using this platform, the outcome of which you will share with the class, as well as identifying how other major news organizations use this application.

Combining your own first-hand experience of using this platform, with the expertise of others, will enable you to produce a handy “how to” guide for use by the rest of the class and other journalists.

The guide should include hyperlinks, screenshots, embedded tweets/images/videos etc. to help others to understand the best way to use this platform. You will present both your fieldwork – and your draft guide - to the class. The group will be expected to provide feedback on the content you have produced, which you will then revise for submission based on any additional points from our class discussions that you wish to incorporate.

Again, after grading, you will have the opportunity to make some revisions, before submitting this to the class blog for wider consumption. *Aim for 800-1,200 words.*

3. **Social Media Storytelling**

Working on your own, you will produce a social media driven story, on the topic – and format - of your choice.

This could be: live blogging from an event, a human interest story, a breaking news feature or a myriad of other (hard and soft news) possibilities.

Your story is likely to include a combination of text, video, still photography, audio and curated links/material produced elsewhere.

You will be expected to pitch two ideas to the class – outlining your idea and the platform(s) you propose to use. The class will then commission you to produce this story. Once the assignment is completed, you will share with the class the lessons you learned from this task.

The assignment will be submitted digitally, with the best pieces (and ideally all of them) shared on the class blog.

4. **Social Media audit**

What goes online, stays online. Google's Eric Schmidt has previously suggested¹ that irresponsible online behaviors may mean that many future job seekers will need to change their name in order to avoid potentially career threatening digital embarrassments.

At the same time, too few job hunters are aware that many prospective employers will review your social footprint, alongside your job application. Just as a good online presence can help you to secure that interview or bag a precious internship, a bad social media presence can have the opposite effect.

In class, we will identify best practice for young job-seekers in five areas:

- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Portfolio page

These principles – which shape “Brand You” - will be relevant to students, whatever their major, and whatever field you wish to go into. Given this, students will undertake the following tasks as part of this assignment:

1. **Creation of profiles/online presence** in these five areas. *(NB: Twitter is optional, if you do not have a Twitter account already. However, students wishing to go into the journalism and comms space should be active in this online arena.)*
2. **Peer review of your social presence.** Students will work in pairs to review each other's digital/social footprint and make recommendations for improvement. Changes will be actioned before submission for grading.
3. **Instructor assessment and recommendations.**

At the end of this assignment, you should have a strong, solid, online presence of which you can be proud, and one which avoids the risk of “digital embarrassment” as you move forward into the world of work.

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

Our classroom will be treated like a newsroom. As a result, you're expected to offer ideas, feedback and to actively support your peers to be the best journalists that they can be.

Therefore, in addition to the above pieces of written and creative work, you will also be expected to actively participate in class: sharing developments in the social media space that have caught your eye (through secondary reading/research), asking smart questions of our guest speakers and giving feedback to one another on different pieces of coursework.

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/google/7951269/Young-will-have-to-change-names-to-escape-cyber-past-warns-Google-Eric-Schmidt.html>

The weightings for the five assessment areas are:

- 20% Organization Analysis
- 20% User Guide
- 20% Storytelling assignment
- 15% Social audit
- 25% Class participation (including attendance)

Attendance

Attendance for all classes and field trips is mandatory.

You should treat the classroom as a place of work, therefore you are expected to notify me, Amanda or Mary, in advance of class if you will be absent. If you miss more than one consecutive class due to a health problem, a medical certificate may be required.

Non-attendance and/or failure to complete assignments on time will be graded with an F for that task.

Late work

If work will be delivered late, with good reason, or you're having problems with an assignment then let me know ASAP. I'm here to help and will always seek to be flexible where I can. However, if reasons are not provided, then you will be docked one grade for every day, after deadline, that any work is late.

Academic integrity

The U of O policy on academic dishonesty will be observed throughout this course. Plagiarizing and/or cheating will result in an automatic failure of the course. To avoid this, you should read: <http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>

COURSE READING

Because the social media landscape changes rapidly, there are currently no set readings for this class (although that may change). You are, however, expected to keep up to date with the latest developments in this space.

There are a number of websites, and newsletters, which students will find it helpful to subscribe to. These sources regularly feature "how to guides," discussions about new social storytelling techniques and data/analysis of new research related to social news.

Recommended resources include: *Nieman Lab*, *MediaShift*, *BBC Academy*, *CJR (Columbia Journalism Review)*, *IJNET*, *Reliable Sources (CNN)*, *recode*, *Pew Research Center (Journalism and Media project)*, *Poynter*, *journalism.co.uk*.

You will be tested on your reading of these resources.

The first class of each week will kick off with an A1/Page One meeting. Newsrooms historically started each day with a discussion about the top stories that they would feature the following day. These stories would be identified through the wires, your contacts and other reading. Journalists would pitch ideas and discuss the merits of them.

We'll kick off each week with a similar process, with each student sharing two social media developments / discussions that they've noted in the past week, with the group, emphasizing – in a short, pithy 30 second manner (per idea) why this development matters and is worth noting.

These findings may influence the nature of assignments that we do during the rest of the week/term, so expect to learn how to pitch ideas – and to give feedback – in a succinct and concise manner.

You will also be set other tasks – to be completed in your own time or in class – related to guest speakers and news developments. At the end of each week, we will conclude our work by discussing how a major news story from that week has been covered on social media.

Half of the group will research how that topic has been covered across specific social networks. The other half will explore how major publishers, as diverse as *BuzzFeed* and the *New York Times*, have covered this topic across different social channels. From this, you'll deduce how social platforms are used for different types of storytelling and this will help to inform your other graded assignments.

COURSE OUTLINE

Each week there will be a guiding theme which will shape our discussions and creative/research work. Where possible, fieldwork and guest speakers will be orientated around that theme. However, this is subject to their availability. The course schedule may also change depending on class needs and other developments.

WEEK ONE - INTRODUCTION

- History of social media.
- Your own usage of social.
- Audience data and trends.
- *Guest Speaker: TBC.*

WEEK TWO – HOW NEWS OUTLETS USE SOCIAL MEDIA

- Page 1 / A1 meeting.
- Analysis of output from specific news organizations.
- Analysis of output on specific platforms.
- News analysis (one story, many angles).
- *Guest Speaker: TBC.*

Assignment 1: Written analysis of how a mainstream news media organization uses social media.

Due: 11:59pm on Sunday.

WEEK THREE- SOCIAL MEDIA STORYTELLING

- Page 1 / A1 meeting.
- Assignment of platform/tool specializations.
- Live Blogging/Reporting exercise.
- Field Reporting (practice run).
- News analysis (one story, many angles).
- *Guest Speaker: TBC*

Assignment 2: Social Media “User Guide” for Journalists (submitted and graded in pairs).

Due: 11:59pm on Sunday.

WEEK FOUR – ADVANCED SOCIAL MEDIA REPORTING SKILLS

- Page 1 / A1 meeting.
- Social discovery and verification.
- Analysis and impact tools (Facebook Graph, Signal, CrowdTangle etc.)

- News analysis (one story, many angles).
- Field Reporting (for real)
- *Guest Speaker: TBC*

Assignment 3: Social Media Storytelling feature.

Due: 11:59pm on Sunday.

WEEK FIVE – SOCIAL AUDIT / “BRAND YOU”

- Page 1 / A1 meeting.
- Best practice for your presence on major social media platforms.
- Peer review of your social footprint.
- Course recap.
- Recommendations and Next Steps.

Assignment 4: Social Media audit.

Due: 11:59pm on Sunday.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sample reading, the list will be updated nearer the time.

General Reports

- **Pew Research Center:** *How Americans Encounter, Recall and Act Upon Digital News*
<http://www.journalism.org/2017/02/09/how-americans-encounter-recall-and-act-upon-digital-news/>
- **Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism:** *Digital News Report (2017)*
<http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/>

Impact of Social Media on Politics / Political Reporting

- **The Guardian:** <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/dec/23/donald-trump-social-media-strategy-internet-republican-nomination-president>
- **The Washington Post:** <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/12/10/reading-6000-of-his-tweets-has-convinced-us-donald-trump-is-a-social-media-master/>

Social Media Platforms / How News Orgs Use Social

Two older case studies, written by your instructor (late 2015) which may give you an idea of the style and format I like – and might look for – for your first assignment.

- **TheMediaBriefing:** <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/seven-reasons-why-snapchat-is-so-hot-right-now>
- **TheMediaBriefing:** <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/how-the-bbc-is-harnessing-mobile-apps-to-engage-global-audiences>

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

Damian Radcliffe is the Carolyn S. Chambers Professor in Journalism at the University of Oregon, a fellow of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University, an honorary research fellow at Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Culture Studies, and a fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA).

He is an experienced digital analyst, consultant, journalist, and researcher who has worked in editorial, research, teaching, and policy positions for the past two decades in the UK, Middle East, and USA.

Damian is a regular contributor to major media outlets such as the BBC Academy, CBS Interactive (ZDNet), Huffington Post, MediaShift, and IJNET, where he writes about digital trends, social media, technology, the business of media, and the evolution of journalism.

His experience encompasses roles at the BBC, the NGO Volunteering Matters, Ofcom (the UK communications regulator), and Qatar's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR), in a combination of strategic and editorial roles.

He has worked across all media sectors (commercial, public, government, regulatory, academic, and nonprofit/civil society) and platforms, from print and digital to TV and radio broadcasting; and continues to actively freelance alongside his role at the University of Oregon.

Radcliffe has written, spoken to, or provided consulting services for a wide range of industry and academic organizations, including:

Abramis Academic Publishing, ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller, BBC Academy, BBC Media Action, BBC Monitoring, BBC World Service, Carnegie UK Trust, Cass Business School, Centre for Research on Communities and Culture, City University London, Cognizant, Columbia Journalism Review (CJR), The Conversation, Eyewitness Media Hub, FJUM (forum journalism and media, Vienna), The Guardian, The Huffington Post, IBC Content Everywhere, IJNET, journalism.co.uk, JustHere, Media Development Investment Fund, MediaShift, Middle East Broadcast Network (MBN), NESTA, Nieman Lab, Northwestern University in Qatar, nuviun, Online Journalism Blog, Qatar Today, Street Fight, TEDx Reset (Turkey), TheMediaBriefing, The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University, Routledge and Your Middle East.

<http://journalism.uoregon.edu/member/radcliffe-damian/>