

# LSCI 437—Social Media Practices

## Syllabus

Fall 2023

Tuesdays, Thursdays

10:50am–12:05pm

Reid Hall 104

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### Course Description

This course explores social media practices from the perspectives of community building. Students will explore social media platforms, individual and organizational identities, privacy and ethics, advertising and analytics, and the capacity of social media to build community. By modeling a service-learning approach, students will engage in the theories and practices of social media through reflective and practice-based activities, culminating in the creation of a social media strategy for an organization.

## Learning Outcomes

1. Understand the historical development and definitions of social media, and critically evaluate information exchanged via social media.
2. Express a personal and organizational voice through social media, with an analysis of ethics, privacy, and bias.
3. Create and implement practical applications of social media for real-world community building.

## Course Text

In order to keep your costs to a minimum, there is no required text to purchase. Course readings are provided through links in the syllabus.

## Expectations for Participation

The class will be an active, community-focused, cooperative learning experience. In-class participation is central to the work of the course. For us to function together as a community, it is important that you be present during our scheduled class time. During class, we will share our perspectives, learn from each other, and grow our knowledge collaboratively as a class. To help make this happen, please read and carefully consider the assigned readings and course topics each week. Our shared discussions are the most important part of this class, as all the assignments build from the foundation that we set together through our in-class discussions. Please make every effort to attend class. You and your work are, in a very real way, the primary texts for this course. If you can't finish the readings or assignments for any reason, please discuss this with me in advance so that we can find a solution together. At the same time, I am responsible to you in important ways. First, I will communicate to you clearly, promptly, and with respect. Second, I'm responsible for shaping each class session as well as the overall semester in a way that encourages your participation and generates interest and motivation from you. If that's not happening at any point, let me know and we can make adjustments.

## The Work of the Course

### Semester Overview

Unit	Duration	What you'll do	Assignments
Introduction	Week 1	Become familiar with the syllabus, and learn about your classmates	Schedule a 1-on-1 meeting with Scott
Theme 1: Platform	Weeks 2-5	Learn about the definitions and historical development of social media; critically evaluate information exchanged via social media.	Project 1: Platform Evaluation  Reflection 1
Theme 2: Identity	Weeks 6-9	Create and implement practical applications of social media for real-world community building.	Project 2: Design a Social Media Campaign  Reflection 2  Mid-term Self-evaluation

Theme 3: Community	Weeks 10-13	Express a personal and organizational voice through social media, with an analysis of ethics, privacy, and bias.	Project 3: Write an Op-Ed  Reflection 3
Final Project: Social Media Strategy Guide	Weeks 14-15	Create and present a Social Media Strategy Guide	Social Media Strategy Guide  Final self-evaluation

### Detailed Schedule of Activities

Introduction to Social Media Practices (Week 1): Introductions			
Class Session	Readings for this class session	Activities and assignment	Topics for the day
Thursday, August 24	Syllabus	Vision cards	Get to know this course  Get to know your classmates

<b>Theme 1—Platform:</b> History of social media. How it works. Where it comes from.			
<b>Learning Outcome:</b> Understand the historical development and definitions of social media, and critically evaluate information exchanged via social media.			
<b>Class Session</b>	<b>Readings for this class session</b>	<b>Activities and assignments</b>	<b>Topics for the day</b>
Tuesday, August 29	<u>It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens, Introduction</u> , by danah boyd [longer book chapter]	Small-group discussion	Understanding social networking characteristics
Thursday, August 31	<u>Social Networking Fact Sheet</u> , Pew Research [short article]  <u>All the World Wide Web's a stage: The performance of identity in online social networks</u> , by Erika Pearson [longer article]	Brand Deck: Defining a social media platform	Who uses social media?  Why and how do people use social media?
Tuesday, September 5	<u>Social Media: Why They Matter and What They Can Do</u> , from <i>Communicating Your Research with Social Media: A Practical Guide to Using Blogs, Podcasts, Data Visualisations and Video</i> [longer book chapter]		Social media: background and applications
Thursday, September 7	<u>How the TikTok Algorithm Works</u> , with TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew [short video]  <u>TikTok Algorithm, explained in 15-seconds</u> , with Virality Now [short video]  <u>TikTok's algorithm and Extreme Content</u> , with Casey Fiesler [short video]  <u>YouTube's Recommendation Algorithm Has a Dark Side</u> , by Zeynep Tufekci [short article]		Algorithms

	<p><u>Pros and Cons of the Algorithm Age</u>, Pew Research [mostly skim this long article— but take a closer look at the main figure toward the top of the article]</p>		
Tuesday, September 12	<p><u>The Social Network</u>, first 15 minutes [medium-length video] [<a href="#">back-up link</a>]</p> <p><u>Behind the Screen: Commercial Content Moderation</u>, with Sarah T. Roberts [longer video]</p> <p><u>Magic Numbers: Treating “the algorithm” as a kind of divine power misunderstands where algorithmic power comes from</u>, by Alana Mohamed [medium-length essay]</p>	<p><b>Reflection 1 Due via D2L at 10:49am</b></p> <p>In-class time to work on Project 1</p>	Algorithms and content moderation
Thursday, September 14	<p><u>Governor Gianforte Bans TikTok in Montana</u>, State of Montana News Room [short press release]</p> <p><u>Montana’s TikTok ban: why has it happened and will it work?</u>, The Guardian [short article]</p> <p><u>TikTok and 5 content creators ask federal judge to block Montana from banning app</u>, AP News [short article]</p> <p><u>Highlights From TikTok CEO's Testimony Before Congress</u>, Insider News [short video]</p> <p><u>TikTok has its faults, but it’s also diverse, eye-opening and completely full of life</u>, by Amelia Tait [short article]</p>	In-class time to work on Project 1	TikTok

Tuesday, September 19	<p><a href="#">Changes to the Instagram feed</a>, with Instagram CEO Adam Mosseri [short video]</p> <p><a href="#">Threads is Doomed</a>, with Morgan Sung [short video]</p> <p><a href="#">Threads is changing the game</a>, with Coco Moe [short video]</p> <p><a href="#">Twitter's evolution</a>, with Corporate Gossip [short video]</p> <p><a href="#">Social Media is Dead</a>, by Edward Ongweso Jr. [longer article]</p>	In-class time to work on Project 1	Social media changing over time
Thursday, September 21	No readings for today: we'll share and discuss Project 1 in class	<b>Project 1 Due via D2L at 10:49am</b>	

<b>Theme 2—Identity:</b> Knowing who you are on social media. Working with campaigns, advertising, and influencers			
<b>Learning Outcome:</b> Create and implement practical applications of social media for real-world community building			
Class Session	Readings for this class session	Activities and assignments	Topics for the day
Tuesday, September 26	<p><a href="#">Strategic health communication on social media: Insights from a Danish social media campaign to address HPV vaccination hesitancy</a> [longer article, MSU log-in required]</p> <p><a href="#">The McDonald's Grimace Shake's Viral (And Gruesome) TikTok Trend, Explained</a>, Forbes [shorter article]</p> <p><a href="#">The grimace shake is a dream and nightmare for McDonald's marketing team</a>, with Ashwinn Krishnaswamy [short video]</p>	Case studies of businesses on social media	Social media strategies: knowing your audience and how to reach them

Thursday, September 28	<a href="#">Breastfeed4Ghana: Design and evaluation of an innovative social media campaign</a> [longer article]	Case studies of businesses on social media	Social media strategies: knowing your audience and how to reach them
Tuesday, October 3	<p><a href="#">The Prime Effect</a>, By Kasim Kabbara [medium article]</p> <p>Review the <a href="#">Deion Sanders Instagram account</a></p> <p><a href="#">The importance of talking to your customers</a>, with Ashwinn Krishnaswamy [short video]</p> <p><a href="#">PSA for New Brands on TikTok</a>, with Ashwinn Krishnaswamy [short video]</p> <p><a href="#">Influencer marketing vs. ads</a>, with Devon Rule [short video]</p> <p><a href="#">How to grow on TikTok in 2023 for lazy people</a>, with Amanda [short video]</p> <p><a href="#">Oh, your TikTok views are low?</a>, with Tyla [short video]</p>	Case studies of businesses on social media	Campaigns, advertising, influencers
Thursday, October 5	<p><a href="#">Library Marketing: From Passion to Practice</a>, by Jill S. Heinze [medium article]</p> <p><a href="#">Leveraging Social Media to Support a Library Levy Campaign</a>, by Ross Fuqua [medium article]</p>	Case studies of businesses on social media	Organizational Identity and marketing
Tuesday, October 10	<p><a href="#">It's Livvy Dunne's World</a>, by Kayla Webley Adler [longer article]</p> <p><a href="#">I Accidentally Became A TikTok Baby Name Influencer</a> [short article]</p>	<p><b>Reflection 2 Due via D2L at 10:49am</b></p> <p>We'll share Reflection 2</p>	Campaigns, advertising, influencers



	Review TikTok accounts for two baby name influencers/creators: <a href="#">@hellomorgantimm</a> and <a href="#">@nameingbebe</a>	in class	
Thursday, October 12	<u>Sickeningly Healthy: Daily Harvest turned culinary wellness into a booming business. And then people started having to get their gallbladders removed</u> , Bloomberg Businessweek [longer article]	In-class time to work on Project 2	Organizational Identity and marketing
Tuesday, October 17	<u>The Complete Guide to Nonprofit Social Media</u> , Canva [medium article]  <u>Using Social Media to Build Community</u> , by Doralyn Rossmann and Scott W. H. Young [medium article]	In-class time to work on Project 2	Social media strategies
Thursday, October 19	No readings; we'll share our Project 2 in class	<b>Project 2 Due via D2L at 10:49am</b>	

**Theme 3—Community:** Ethics, engagement, and the impacts of social media on society.

**Learning Outcome:** Express a personal and organizational voice through social media, with an analysis of ethics, privacy, and bias

Class Session	Readings for this class session	Activities and assignments	Topics for the day
Tuesday, October 24	<u>Kremlin-funded media is spreading Ukraine disinformation</u> , from the Center for Countering Digital Hate [short article]  <u>Revealed: 50 million Facebook profiles harvested for Cambridge Analytica in major data breach</u> , The Guardian [medium article]  <u>Social Media Seen as Mostly Good for Democracy Across Many Nations, But U.S. is a Major Outlier</u> , Pew Research [long article]	<b>Midterm Self-Evaluation Due via D2L at 11:59pm</b>	Disinformation and privacy
Thursday, October 26	<u>An Ugly Truth</u> , by Sheera Frenkel and Cecilia Kang [longer book chapter]		More on disinformation

	<p><u>Her reaction was THE BEST one 🤩❤️</u>, by Neenib Youkana [short video]</p>		on + privacy
Tuesday, October 31	<p><u>Unreal Keanu</u> [short videos]</p> <p><u>Tom Cruise Deepfake</u> [short video]</p> <p><u>Beyond fake</u>, by Rob Horning [medium article]</p> <p><u>Asking Technoskeptical Questions about ChatGPT</u>, Civics of Technology [medium article]</p>	Deepfakes and ChatGPT	Disinformation and misinformation
Thursday, November 2	<p><u>Is social media is becoming less social?</u>, by Ron Horning [longer article]</p> <p><u>It's Not Just BeReal That's Over. It's Social Media As We Know It</u>, by Daisy Jones [shorter article]</p> <p><u>On social media's "For You Page" focus</u>, by Matt Lorence [short video]</p>	In-class time to work on Project 3	Evolving social media
Tuesday, November 7	<p><u>We Pay an Ugly Cost for Ads on Twitter</u>, by Zeynep Tufekci [short article]</p> <p><u>The Moral Case for No Longer Engaging With Elon Musk's X</u>, by David Lee [short article]</p> <p><u>Two brands suspend advertising on X after their ads appeared next to pro-Nazi content</u>, by Clare Duffy and Brian Fung [short article]</p> <p><u>TikTok is reportedly testing a paid, ad-free version of its app</u>, by Mia Sato [very short article]</p>	<p><b>Reflection 3 Due via D2L at 10:49am</b></p> <p>We'll share Reflection 3 in class</p>	Advertising complexities
Thursday, November 9	<p><u>Dairy Farmers Managing Cows and Social Media to Connect with Consumers</u>, from Animal Agriculture Coalition [medium-length article]</p>	In-class time to work on Project 3	Community engagement in an evolving

	<u>Why the Internet Isn't Fun Anymore</u> , by Kyle Chayka [medium-length article]		landscape
Tuesday, November 14	Share and reflect on your peer partner's Project 3	<b>Project 3 Due via D2L at 10:49am</b>	In-class peer evaluation of Project 3
Thursday, November 16	<b>NO CLASS.</b>		Begin work toward final project.
Tuesday, November 21	<b>NO CLASS. FALL BREAK.</b>		
Thursday, November 23	<b>NO CLASS. FALL BREAK.</b>		

<b>Creating and Presenting a Social Media Strategy</b>			
<b>Class Session</b>	<b>Readings for this class session</b>	<b>Activities and assignments</b>	<b>Topics for the day</b>
Tuesday, November 28	No readings: In-class collaborative work	Work on your final project	
Thursday, November 30	No readings: In-class collaborative work	Work on your final project	
Tuesday, December 5	No readings: In-class collaborative work	Work on your final project	
Thursday, December 7	Presentations	<b>Final Project Due via D2L at 10:49am</b>  Final project presentations	

Finals Week			
Class Session	Readings for this class session	Activities and assignments	Topics for the day
Thursday, December 14, 10:00am - 11:50am	Open session	<b>Final Self-Evaluation Due via D2L December 14 at 11:50am</b>	—

## Descriptions of Course Activities

### Readings

For each class session there are one or two readings that will inform discussion. These readings and discussions are the foundation of the class, and they in turn inform the reflections and projects.

### Reflections

Periodically throughout the semester, you will create a reflection that articulates your response our current readings and discussions. There will be three reflections throughout the semester. The reflections function as low-stakes diagnostic check-ins. I will create the reflection prompts in response to our class discussions, and I will distribute the prompts closer to the due dates for each reflection.

Your reflection can take one of the three following forms:

- A written response, around 250 words
- An audio or video response, about 2 minutes
- A sketch that expresses your thoughts. This could be a drawn picture or a graphic using whichever medium you prefer, such as an infographic software, Microsoft Paint, or pen and paper. Once you've created your sketch, attached a caption (2 or 3 sentences) that explains or interprets the sketch.

## Thematic Projects

We have three projects this semester, corresponding to our three thematic units. The projects will allow you to explore course topics more deeply, and are designed to provide you with an opportunity to share your ideas and demonstrate your familiarity with the course concepts.

### Project 1: Platform Evaluation

In danah boyd's *It's Complicated*, we are introduced to the concept of the networked public, and in boyd's article *Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship*, we learn about the concept of the social network. For this first project, we will unpack these terms and definitions, and apply them to a social media platform in use today, such as TikTok, Instagram, or Snapchat.

### Project 2: Design a Social Media Campaign

Based on our second theme, this project will entail designing a social media campaign. The goal of this project is to apply your new knowledge of social media through a social campaign that generates engagement around a business, brand, or organization of your choice. In essence, you will seek to answer the question, "How do you get people to engage in your product or service?"

### Project 3: Create Persuasive Social Media

In Project 2, you created campaign content for a product or a service. For Project 3, you will create content for a perspective or an idea. This assignment is as an opportunity to make an argument for something you think to be true. Your project will explore a dimension of social media drawn from our class readings and discussions. First, take a position that argues for or against a given statement (to be provided). Then, create a piece of social media content that persuasively shares your perspective on the issue. This project has a peer evaluation component: you will be paired with another student and you will be asked to respond to evaluation prompts related to presentation and persuasiveness.

## Final Project: Social Media Strategy Guide

The Social Media Strategy Guide is the culmination of the course topics and skills. To complete this final project, I will provide you with a template that represents different aspects for building a cohesive approach to social media community building. First you will select an organization or influencer to serve as the subject of the guide, and then you will complete the guide as appropriate for your organization or influencer. We will have time at the end of the semester to work on the guide in class. Our final class sessions will be dedicated to sharing and discussing our guides.

## Self-Evaluations

At the middle of the semester, you will produce 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 my own evaluation of you, but will inform how I adjust the course itself as we progress together.

### Midterm Self-evaluation

**Instructions:** Please respond to the following questions. 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 me about the course and your work. 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 me about the course and your work.

Submit your response via D2L either as a brief written response (around 500 words) or as a recorded audio/video (around 3-4 minutes).

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?

2. How has your thinking evolved so far in the class? How do our course topics and discussions relate to your personal life and your course of study at MSU?
3. Have you completed all assigned work for the course?
4. What letter grade would you give yourself for the first half of this course and why? Consider your preparedness for class, your participation in discussion, the strength of your reflections and projects, and your goals for the semester.
5. How is this course meeting your personal learning goals?
6. (Optional, but encouraged): What questions do you have for me at this point? About the topics of the class? About your work/progress this semester? Are there any aspects of your work that you would particularly like feedback on? Do you have feedback for me about the class so far?

### Final Self-evaluation

**Instructions:** Please respond to the following questions. 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.

Submit your response either as a brief written response (aim for 250–500 words) or as a recorded audio/video (around 2–4 minutes).

1. Were you prepared for each class week? Did you do all the required reflections 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. How has your thinking and practice related to social media evolved over the course of the term? What new insights have emerged?
3. How do the course readings and activities relate to your own life, your course of study at MSU, or your future direction post-graduation?

4. What letter grade would you give yourself for the semester and why? Consider your engagement with the readings, reflections, and projects, your participation in class discussion, and the strength of your Social Media Strategy Guide.

## Grading

For this class, you will ultimately make a recommendation to me for your final grade based on your completion of “Grade Conditions” that are outlined below. While I will assign final grades (as officially required), you will evaluate your own work throughout the course through self-evaluations that will inform my evaluation of you. I have included grade conditions for A, B, and C (with lower grades at my discretion) that you can use as a reference in evaluating your own work.

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 talk about your performance in the course. If you are worried about your grade, your best approach will be to join the discussions, do the reading, and complete the reflections and 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

Your Activity	What an "A" grade looks like	What a "B" grade looks like	What a "C" grade looks like
Reflections and projects	<p>Reflections and projects demonstrate a clear understanding of the course topics, as connected to the course readings, exercises, and discussions.</p> <p>Complete reflections and projects with sincere effort and attention.</p>	<p>Reflections and projects demonstrate an understanding of connected to the course readings, exercises, and discussions.</p> <p>Complete reflections and projects with some effort and attention.</p>	<p>Reflections and projects demonstrate some understanding as connected to the course readings, exercises, and discussions.</p> <p>Complete reflections and projects.</p>
Course Participation	<p>Participate with good faith and generosity in all discussions</p> <p>Complete all four projects on time</p> <p>Complete all three reflection papers on time</p> <p>Meet with me individually to establish a personal learning goal</p>	<p>Participate with good faith and generosity in all discussions</p> <p>Complete all four projects, and submit at least two on time</p> <p>Complete all three reflection papers, and submit at least two on time</p> <p>Meet with me individually to establish a personal learning goal</p>	<p>Participate with good faith and generosity in most discussions</p> <p>Complete all four projects, and submit at least two on time</p> <p>Complete all three reflection papers, and submit at least two on time</p>

Self-Evaluations	Complete the mid-term and final self-evaluations with sincere reflection and thorough familiarity with course readings and activities.	Complete the mid-term and final self-evaluation with sincere reflection and some familiarity with course readings and activities.	Complete the mid-term and final self-evaluations.

## University Conduct Policies

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

## Campus Resources

### Engagement

- We can all learn from each other. I encourage you to actively participate – both talking and listening – in class discussions in person and online. Sharing ideas, perspectives, experiences, and expectations will make the course better for all of us.
- Feel free to work with others in strategizing your assignments. Any work you submit should be your own.

### Discussion Etiquette

- In discussions, I encourage you to actively listen and to give pause before speaking.

- Conflict is healthy as long as it is respectful. If you disagree with others, please keep the disagreement professional and do not make it personal.

### Pronoun Policy

- Using pronouns are a way to demonstrate respect for each other.
- Please feel free to self-identify your name and pronouns.
- If you wish to express a chosen name, have you heard about the Chosen Name system: [montana.edu/chosenname](https://montana.edu/chosenname)

### Disability/Accessibility Accommodation

- If you are a student with a disability and wish to use your approved accommodations for this course, please contact me to discuss. Please have your Accommodation Notification or Blue Card available for verification of accommodations.
- The Office of Disability Services is located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Romney Hall.
- MSU Resources for Students with Disabilities: [montana.edu/disabilityservices](https://montana.edu/disabilityservices)

### Academic Honesty Statement

- Please make sure you submit original work created by you. If you are pulling information from other resources, please cite those sources so that your classmates and I can understand the context of your ideas. If you want any guidance for how to acknowledge the contributions of others in your thinking and writing, let me know and we'll work through it.

### Course Materials and Copyright

- This syllabus, course lectures and presentations, and any course materials are licensed [CC BY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which means that you can share them freely with attribution: if you share course materials, just say who made them and where they're coming from.

## Basic Needs

- Your safety and wellbeing is more important than anything going on in class. Please feel free to reach out to me if you need to talk. Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing or personal safety is urged to contact the [Dean of Students office](#) for support. Please also notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I can.