

**Syllabus**  
**COMM 345: Social Media Research**  
**Spring 2021 Online**  
**Prerequisite: COMM 245**

**Instructor:** Morgan Alberts Smith

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**Office Hours/Availability:** I am available via text or email. I generally respond within 24 hours, if not sooner.

**Course Description:** In this course students will learn best practices of social media integration in marketing campaigns and how they can be used to deliver traditional messages on ever-changing platforms. This course will create an understanding of the power and limitations of social media for delivering content while allowing students to delve deeper into research strategies to determine what are the best platforms for a brand or company in terms of marketing.

**Required Readings:**

Quesenberry, K. A. (2019). *Social media strategy: marketing, advertising, and public relations in the consumer revolution*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

ISBN 9781538101353

**Course Learning Objectives:**

As a research course, COMM 345, is intended to help students navigate the ever-changing landscape of social media by helping them determine reliable and up-to-date sources to create a robust and well thought-out social media campaign for an entity of their choice. Constant checking-in with the professor and participating in class discussions are keys to success for this course. Research and assignments completed throughout the semester will culminate in each student's final project.

By the end of the course students will have the knowledge and skills to implement social media strategies to address a variety of communication challenges. They will:

1. Understand and be able to determine and evaluate the best research sources to garner trustworthy information on a continuously developing medium;
2. Learn the current standards in source and citation documentation and formatting standards in the Communication field;
3. Be able to think critically about the changing relationship between social media, traditional media, journalism, and strategic communication and how to use that in terms of marketing and campaigns;
4. Be able to create a plan for the use of social media platforms as a complement to a specific project;
5. Understand, discuss and write about social media within an ethical framework.
6. Consider the use of the three P's – people, place, and profit – as the basis for decision making, and highlight to them the importance of this progressive way of thinking.

**Assignments:**

**Canvas:** Students will be expected to utilize Canvas during the semester to turn in assignments as well as to communicate with their classmates.

**Participation:** Students must complete the chapter readings, participate in online discussions and complete assignments.

**Professor Check-ins:** Throughout the semester students are required to meet with the instructor to discuss stumbling blocks, successes, next steps and to go over drafts or revisions as necessary.

**Social Media Presentation:** Students will be asked to educate their classmates on a unique social media platform that they can then utilize for their final project. Students should be able to demonstrate to their classmates how the platform can be used in marketing for a company or organization.

**Social Media Audit:** Students will complete a social media audit of an organization, brand or company of their choice using best practices.

**SWOT Analysis:** Students will complete a SWOT analysis of an organization, brand or company of their choice using Communication standards.

**Personas:** Students will create three personas that represent the audience of an organization, brand or company of their choice using best practices.

**Midterm:** Students will be given a midterm exam to complete which will test knowledge of what has been covered in readings and class discussions. It will be true/false, short answer and essay.

**Blog Post:** Students will write a fully researched blog post that complements their final project topic.

**Final Project/Final Exam:** Each student will put together a campaign and presentation utilizing various social media and research processes that they have worked on throughout the duration of the semester. Although graded individually, each assignment throughout the semester will be used as a component of the final presentation.

#### **Grading:**

Work is evaluated according to collegiate expectations for scholarly performance at the undergraduate level. A grade of "A" shows superior quality of performance and a comprehensive mastery of required work. A grade of "B" indicates good quality of performance in meeting course requirements. A grade of "C" points to satisfactory quality of performance and completion of minimum requirements. A grade of "D" is for work of less than satisfactory quality. A grade of "F" indicates failure. Points are distributed as follows:

| <b>Assignments:</b>         | <b>Total Points</b> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Final Project               | 500                 |
| Midterm                     | 350                 |
| Participation (Discussions) | 250                 |
| Blog Post                   | 200                 |
| Social Media Audit          | 200                 |
| SWOT Analysis               | 200                 |
| Personas                    | 100                 |
| Social Media Presentation   | 100                 |
| <u>Professor Check-Ins</u>  | <u>100</u>          |
| Total                       | 2,000               |

**Note:** The instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus and classroom assignments upon notice to students.

**ADA Statement:** If you have special needs or concerns, especially needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act, health issues or family responsibilities that will affect your learning or attendance, please share them with me as soon as possible. Efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.

### Additional Guidelines

1. Please contact me if you have an issue or concern. I am understanding and flexible if you talk with me about problems, concerns, issues, etc., BEFORE they reach crisis stage. I can't help you if I don't know.
2. **Syllabus:** We will go over this syllabus. Please read this syllabus cover-to-cover the first day and then use it regularly over the semester.
3. **Respect:** Language that demeans or otherwise is harmful to individuals or groups makes it difficult to learn. In this class we will respect diverse ideas, experiences, values, and communication styles. All comments deserve and will receive respectful hearings. You are not pressured to *agree* with everything others say. You need to *respect* their right to say it.
4. **Creativity:** Creativity is encouraged and rewarded (which includes the creative application and observation of the concepts discussed). If you have an idea for an activity, assignment, or experience, discuss it with me. I'll try to work it in.
5. **Copies:** You must keep a copy of all assignments for the entire term. If, at any time, I ask for a copy of a writing assignment, you need to be able to send a new copy. In the event that you cannot reproduce a copy of your assignment, you are not guaranteed the chance to make up that assignment.
6. **Civility and Etiquette:** Please observe cultural norms of civility.
7. **Academic Honesty:** This is simple. Do not cheat (e.g., use crib notes during a test, ask classmates for answers, lie about an assignment, plagiarize a speech or visual aids, etc.). If discovered, cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the Honor Council as academic dishonesty and the individual will receive an F/Zero on the assignment.

**Requirements for Written Work:** Communication is a discipline that emphasizes speaking and writing. Written work must include accurate and complete citations of sources and a complete reference list using APA style.

| Week   | Topic                                                                                                                                               |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 1 | The Scale and Scope of Social Media<br>Read Chapter 1<br>Due: Discussion 1                                                                          |
| Week 2 | Shifting Influences and the Decline of Push Marketing<br>Read Chapter 2<br>Due: Discussion 2                                                        |
| Week 3 | A Marketer's Point of View from Control to Engagement<br>Read Chapter 3<br>Due: Social Media Presentation<br>Discussion 3                           |
| Week 4 | Lay a Foundation and Frame the Conversation<br>Read Chapter 4<br>Make Repairs and Jumpstart the Conversation<br>Read Chapter 5<br>Due: Discussion 4 |

|         |                                                                                                                                          |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 5  | Integrating Marketing, Advertising, and Public Relations with Social Media<br>Read Chapter 6<br>Due: SWOT Analysis<br>Discussion 5       |
| Week 6  | Social Networks, Blogs and Forums<br>Read Chapter 7<br>Due: Discussion 6                                                                 |
| Week 7  | MidTerm                                                                                                                                  |
| Week 8  | Microblogging and Media Sharing<br>Read Chapter 8<br>Due: Blog Post<br>Discussion 8                                                      |
| Week 9  | Geosocial, Live Video, Ratings and Review<br>Read Chapter 9<br>Due: Discussion 9                                                         |
| Week 10 | Social Bookmarking and Social Knowledge<br>Read Chapter 10<br>Due: Discussion 10                                                         |
| Week 11 | Social Media Insights and Crowdsourcing<br>Read Chapter 11<br>Due: Personas<br>Discussion 11                                             |
| Week 12 | Content Marketing and Influencer Marketing<br>Read Chapter 12<br>Social Care and Social Selling<br>Read Chapter 13<br>Due: Discussion 12 |
| Week 13 | Write Your Plan, Plan Your Sell<br>Read Chapter 14<br>Social Media Law, Ethics and Etiquette<br>Read Chapter 15<br>Due: Discussion 13    |
| Week 14 | Final Presentations                                                                                                                      |

### Course Projects/Assignments:

**Social Media Presentation:** Students will be asked to educate their classmates on a unique social media platform that they can then utilize for their final project. Students should be able to demonstrate to their classmates how the platform can be used in marketing for a company or organization.

Create a powerpoint presentation (minimum of five slides, maximum of seven. Your citation slide cannot count in the minimum/maximum) on a social media platform that complements your final project. This platform should be the “next best thing” for your topic. You should be able to explain why this platform will work for your topic and be able to rationalize it with sources. Try to avoid the most common social media platforms, think outside of the box! What platform have you used that has a social component but may not traditionally be thought of as social media? Make sure to include:

- screenshots of the app and key features
- why is this app interesting and useful
- what's the history of the app
- how many people are using it
- Why it will work for your topic
- Do you think it will continue its popularity? Why or why not?
- All sources should be cited

**Personas:** Students will create three personas that represent the audience of their chosen organization, brand or company using best practices.

You must complete three personas for your audience. To determine your audience, you need to decide what your end goal for your organization needs to be. Do you want to use social media as a marketing tool? Do you want to use social media as a communication tool to inform? Are you trying to find new ways to share your news? Once you have your end goal, create three general personas of your target audience. Name them. Make each one a different person that can embody a number of characteristics. A persona worksheet has been provided that will help you complete your task.

Submit persona worksheets to me as a PDF. You can either use the slide (as PPT or Google Slide) or work directly in PDF (if you have that technological capability). Make sure to fully answer all of the questions in the worksheet and provide an image for your persona.

**Social Media Audit:** Students will complete a social media audit of an organization, brand or company of their choice using best practices.

There are multiple ways to do a social media audit, but the two examples below are some best practices. One of the examples, the slide share presentation, goes into more depth and would be more appropriate for a larger organization or brand. For smaller organizations and individuals the Big Commerce audit is recommended.

- <https://www.slideshare.net/brettfarmiloe/social-media-audit-example-53932946>
- <https://www.bigcommerce.com/ecommerce-answers/what-is-a-social-media-audit-how-to-do-it/>

The completed audit is fairly flexible in format. If it is easier to complete a PPT presentation (or PDF of the presentation), that is acceptable. It might be easier as a Word document. Whatever works best for you, submit it in that manner. Please make sure when using Word that the document is double spaced. There is no set length requirement.

**SWOT Analysis:** Students will complete a SWOT analysis of an organization, brand or company of their choice using Communication standards.

There are formats in which to complete a SWOT Analysis, all answering the same questions. Included is a guide and various templates for the SWOT analysis. Choose what template you feel most comfortable with and complete it for your organization/topic chosen for your final project.

<https://www.aha.io/roadmapping/guide/templates/swot-analysis>

The completed analysis is fairly flexible in format, depending on the template that you choose. Make sure to fully complete the analysis, by identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the organization/topic.

**Blog Post:** Blog posts should be on a topic that complements your final project and should be a minimum of five paragraphs. Make sure to include references to at least two outside sources and contain an image illustrating the topic (properly credited). As the author you should express a primary purpose in a compelling statement and order your supporting points logically and convincingly.

This needs to be more than an opinion piece, but a researched article on a topic that applies to your final project. It can be a how-to that goes along with your topic, or a review of a book/movie/article/radio show that is important. While the writing may be more casual (first person, vs. third person), the blog must be more informational than entertainment. Make sure to include sources at the end of your post in APA format.

research processes that they have worked on throughout the duration of the semester. Although graded individually, each assignment will be used as a component of the final project

Choose your organization or brand. What is your main goal? Are you interested in marketing? Do you want to market for a brand or a non-profit or a major company or an individual? Or would you like to be a communication manager for a local government? How would you use social media in that realm? Once you've chosen your goal and organization, email me with your basic plan so that we can determine, together, if it will be sufficient fodder for the assignments throughout the semester and your final paper.

For your paper, you need to introduce your topic and inform your audience about why you chose this topic. Why are they/is this worthy of a semester's worth of work? We need to know the history, their mission (or your interpretation of a mission if a documented one is not available). You need to have researched their competitors, you need to make this topic yours. Be 100% behind it. This is where your SWOT analysis can help.

Part of your paper will include a social media campaign. You've written a blog post, you've completed an audit, you've identified a new (or the best) social media platform to use, and you know your audience (personas) - use that knowledge to create a social media campaign complete with a month's worth of social posts complete with graphics. A few of those posts can be about your blog post - but how else would you promote it? Think infographics, think memes, think Did You Know. Make sure to be able to tell us why this platform, why this day, why this TIME of day, why this type of post. Cite your sources.

You need to reference your work throughout the semester as rationalization for this final paper. You will want to include them as appendices. A list of suggested paper components is included below.

Your paper needs to be a minimum of 15 pages. Double-spaced. 11 point font, Times New Roman or Calibri. APA format.

### **Suggested paper components**

Introduction

Why?

Campaign

Conclusion

Sources

Appendices: SWOT Analysis, Personas, Audit, Blog Post, Graphics to go with Campaign

### **Image details -**

- It can be as simple as a picture that goes with what you're talking about.
- Don't just grab something from Google - that's stealing intellectual property. Go to a place like Pixabay.com and use royalty free photos.
- Want to make an infographic or your own COOL charts and graphs? Go to Canva.com. It's free and offers clean templates for graphic design newbies or just an easy platform for experienced folk.

Possible sources for How-To on Campaign

- <https://www.ragan.com/category/social-media/>