

**Introduction to Social Media**  
**04:192:305**  
**Spring 2017**

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<i>Office Hours:</i>	Monday & Thursday, 1:30pm-2:30pm and by appointment
<i>Course Time:</i>	Monday & Thursday, 11:30am-12:50pm
<i>Course Room:</i>	CI 103 (SC&I Building, 4 Huntington Street)
<i>Course Website:</i>	<a href="http://sakai.rutgers.edu">sakai.rutgers.edu</a>
<i>Course Facebook:</i>	<a href="https://facebook.com/groups/sci305">facebook.com/groups/sci305</a>
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### **Course Description**

Social media services such as Facebook and Twitter represent a new class of communication platforms that have become quickly interwoven into the everyday lives of millions of people around the world. In this course, we will draw on competing communication perspectives to explore the reasons behind the widespread popularity of these platforms. In doing so, we will consider the role of individual choice, social influence, technological influence, and how these three perspectives can be combined. We will further explore the implications of social media for personal relationships, youth culture, organizations, social research, and privacy.

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Apply multiple communication perspectives to make sense of social media adoption and use.
- Understand the various methodological approaches that can be used to study social media.
- Discuss social media intelligently using appropriate language and terminology derived from scholarly papers and class discussion.
- Understand the implications of social media for a variety of social issues.
- Think abstractly about the role of social media in personal and organizational contexts.

## Required Readings

There is no required textbook for this class. All readings will be available on the course's Sakai website ([sakai.rutgers.edu](http://sakai.rutgers.edu)). Log in using your Rutgers NetID, navigate to the course site, and browse the *Course Readings* page. The reading materials for each week of class are also listed in the *Course Outline* section of this syllabus.

If you encounter a problem with Sakai, you can contact the help desk at [sakai@rutgers.edu](mailto:sakai@rutgers.edu) or call them at 848 445 8721 between 8am-6pm on Monday through Friday.

## Contact Information

The most reliable way to reach me is [by email](#). Please include "SCI 305" in the e-mail subject - that ensures we can identify your message as related to this class and give it appropriate attention. I will typically get back to you within 3-5 days of receiving your email. Not including the class name in the subject will slow down the response time.

You can also find me during our office hours. I encourage you to stop by for a chat at least once during the semester. If you have other classes during the time when we hold office hours, you can email or come talk to me after class to schedule an appointment.

Use our [Facebook group](#) and the Twitter hashtag [#SCI305](#) to share relevant news, comments, or questions with the class.

## Social Media Policy

While you are in this class, I will not connect with you (follow, befriend, etc.) on any social media platform. I will not evaluate your online presence or posts, except the ones that you specifically ask me to look at, share in class, post on our Facebook page, or tag with the course hashtag. We will discuss this policy during the weeks when we talk about privacy and anonymity, self-presentation, and imagined audiences online.

## Course Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes. If you know you would have to miss a class, use the Rutgers University absence reporting website ([sims.rutgers.edu/ssra](http://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra)) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. The system will automatically send me an email. If you are unable to attend classes for longer than one week, you should contact a dean of students who can help verify your circumstances. University policy excuses absences due to religious observance or participation, and permits students to make up work missed for that reason. You should notify me at least two weeks in advance if you are unable to come to class or take an exam due to religious observance.

The lecture slides from each class will be uploaded on Sakai, usually by the end of the week. Note that the slides will only provide a general outline of the topics discussed in class. They do not include all the important details. You will need to be in class and pay attention in order to be prepared for tests and assignments. If you miss a class, you should do the readings for it, examine the slides, and borrow notes from a classmate in order to catch up.

On occasion, the university may have to cancel classes due to inclement weather. To check if classes are canceled, visit [campusstatus.rutgers.edu](http://campusstatus.rutgers.edu) or call 732-932-7799.

## Course Requirements and Evaluation

### *Midterm and final exams (300 points each)*

The class will have a midterm exam and a non-cumulative final exam.

- **Midterm exam:** covers material from day 1 through 12
- **Final exam:** covers material from day 14 through 24

The exams may include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short open-ended questions about key issues we have covered. You can expect questions dealing with major principles and concepts explained in class, as well as their application to specific contexts, cases, or technologies.

Requests for make-up exams for people who missed the original date will **very rarely** be granted, and only for students who have a verifiable excuse (e.g. a medical emergency). In exceptional cases where the instructor accommodates a make-up exam on a later date without a verified excuse, the student's score will be **reduced by 20 points**.

### *Group project (250 points)*

Students will complete a collaborative project in groups of 2-3 people. Each group will select a cause and craft a social media message to promote it. The cause can come from a wide range of areas: select something that you are passionate about. You can focus on promoting civil rights, social equality, preventing drunk driving, saving endangered rhinos, supporting local journalism, convincing sports fans to be nicer to the opposing team, adopting puppies from local shelters, bringing back your favorite canceled TV show, etc.

Your task will be to create an image, video, meme, or other spreadable content promoting your cause. Select the most appropriate format, pick a social media platform, and spread your message. While you are free to promote your cause over multiple channels, you should select one primary social media platform for this project.

Part of your assignment will be to write a report about the project and present it in class. Every student will also write and submit a brief evaluation statement describing how tasks were distributed and completed in the group.

There will be an online vote for the best campaign. The group that scores highest, along with the group whose campaign receives the most social media attention, will receive 15 points extra credit.

### **I. Project (200 points)**

Each project should be described in a report that includes the following components:

#### (1) *The cause*

Describe the cause you will promote. What is the action you want to encourage? Be specific. For instance, if your focus is on conservation, the specific behavior you are promoting may be recycling, carpooling, donating to the World Wildlife Fund, and so on.

What are the background and origin of your cause? What are some previous efforts made to promote it? Were they successful or not? Why?

(2) *The audience*

Who are the people you are targeting with your message? Consider their key characteristics (nationality, location, age, gender, race, ethnicity, education, income, etc.) What do they like and dislike? What is their attitude towards your cause? How will your campaign appeal to them, engage them, compel them to take action?

(3) *The social media*

Which social media platform did you select? How does it serve your needs, in terms of the content formats you can use and the audiences you can reach? What are the user demographics of the platform? What are the technological features it offers that will help you reach and engage your audience?

Reports should comply with the following requirements:

- The report should include a description of your social media message and a link where that message can be found. The message should be posted in a way that is publicly accessible.
- The report should be **12 pages** long, double-spaced, using a 12-point font with a 1-inch margin on all sides. You do not need a title page, but should include the names of all group members.
- The report should include **at least 10** relevant citations. They may come from academic works, stories from reputable and credible media outlets, or industry reports. The citations and bibliography should be formatted in APA style (one place where you can learn more about it is the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#)). You can use a free citation manager to store and format citations (e.g. [www.zotero.com](http://www.zotero.com)), or a simpler online tool to format selected citations (e.g. [www.refme.com/citation-generator/apa](http://www.refme.com/citation-generator/apa) or [www.bibme.org/apa](http://www.bibme.org/apa)).
- The report should be clearly and logically organized. All group members need to carefully proofread the final draft of the report before submitting it. You should confirm that it meets all the requirements and make sure that the text is clearly written, grammatically correct, and free of spelling errors.

Reports should be submitted individually by each team member through the “Assignments” section of Sakai by the end of the day on April 19. **Reports submitted by e-mail will not be accepted.** Late reports will be accepted until April 22, but each day of delay past the deadline will reduce your grade by 20 points. **Each group member needs to submit a separate copy of the same report on Sakai** to confirm that everyone agrees on and approves of the final version that is turned in. The report should be included as a single-file attachment in PDF or Word format

## II. Evaluation (20 points)

Every student will submit a brief (1-2 paragraph) individual evaluation statement explaining the responsibilities and contributions of each member in their group for the project and writing of the report. The statement should describe how tasks were distributed and completed in the group. The evaluation will be submitted through Sakai and will not be accepted over e-mail. The evaluation statement will play a role in assessing how much each member contributed to the completion of the assignment, which will affect individual grades for the report.

## III. Presentation (30 points)

Each group should prepare a 15-minute presentation based on their final project. You can use slides, [Prezi](#), a pre-recorded video, or any other format you prefer. Be ready to answer questions from the instructor and from your peers about your presentation.

### *Participation (150 points)*

Regular attendance is required (but not sufficient) in order to get a high participation score. All students are expected to be active participants in the conversations we will have around social media topics. You should read all the required materials carefully and thoroughly, identify their key points, think about their strengths and weaknesses, and be prepared to discuss them in class. Not only the frequency, but also the quality of your contributions will be considered.

In addition to your participation in class, you should also contribute to our social media discussion on Facebook by posting links, questions, answers, and comments in our class group ([facebook.com/groups/sci305](https://facebook.com/groups/sci305)). You are required to post **at least twice a week** - part of your participation grade will be based on your social media activity. If you are not a Facebook user, or do not want to use your private account for class activities, you should register a new account.

Your participation will be graded as follows:

- **Class participation:** 100 points
- **Social media participation:** 50 points

Keep in mind that your grade will be based on your contributions throughout the semester. This means you cannot compensate for earlier lack of participation with high activity in the last few weeks of the class.

### *Grade breakdown & scale*

A and B grades in this class will be reserved for outstanding work. To get a high grade, students need to participate actively in class, be thorough and careful in exam answers and assignments, and demonstrate excellent understanding of the subject, critical thinking, and originality in their work. The grade breakdown is as follows:

<b>Exams:</b>	A. Midterm exam	300 points
	B. Final exam	300 points
<b>Group project:</b>	A. Project	200 points
	B. Evaluation	20 points
	C. Presentation	30 points
<b>Participation:</b>	A. In class	100 points
	B. Online	50 points
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

The final grade will be awarded according to the following scale:

A	900-1000 points
B+	850-899 points
B	800-849 points
C+	750-799 points
C	700-749 points
D	600-699 points
F	Below 600 points

### *Grade appeals*

You can submit appeals for individual assignment grades up to **5 days** after the grades are announced. **Appeals submitted later than that will not be accepted.** To be reviewed, your appeal has to be submitted in writing over e-mail to your instructor. It should present solid arguments demonstrating that you deserve a higher grade.

If you have concerns about your course grade, schedule an appointment early during the semester to discuss it. Once the course grades are announced, they are final and will only be changed in case of an error in the computation of the student's score.

### **Academic Integrity**

You are required to complete your own assignments and exams, and always acknowledge the sources of contributions, materials, quotes, and ideas that you did not develop yourself. The consequences of scholastic dishonesty in this class and at Rutgers University in general are very serious. For more details, consult the [University's academic integrity policy](#). Any violation will at a minimum result in no credit earned for the assignment in question. Serious violations of academic integrity may prevent students from completing the course or their academic program. If you have questions about issues related to plagiarism or academic integrity, do not hesitate to contact me.

### **Accommodation**

This course will accommodate any student in need of assistance. Students with documented disabilities who need accommodations should contact the Rutgers Disabilities Services Office (see [disabilityservices.rutgers.edu](http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu) for details). You can also speak with a SC&I adviser by visiting the Office of Student Services in the SC&I Building, Room 214 or calling them at 848-932-7500 (dial 2 as your menu choice). Please contact me with information about the requested assistance and present your Letter of Accommodation as early in the semester as possible.

### **Additional Resources**

The university offers a number of resources that you can access if needed:

- For additional tutoring, training, or **writing help**, visit the Rutgers Learning Center (online at [lrc.rutgers.edu](http://lrc.rutgers.edu)) and the Writing Center ([plangere.rutgers.edu](http://plangere.rutgers.edu)).
- If you need a consultation on **research materials** and ways to find them, you can contact the Rutgers University [subject specialist librarian for communication](#).
- If you need help with **class schedule or registration**, visit the Student Services Office located in CI 214, and online at [comminfo.rutgers.edu/student-services/contact-us.html](http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/student-services/contact-us.html).
- The SC&I IT Services can help you with various **technological problems**. You can find them in CI 120, by phone at 848-932-5555, or by email at [help@comminfo.rutgers.edu](mailto:help@comminfo.rutgers.edu).
- If you encounter **problems with Sakai**, you can contact the help desk at [sakai@rutgers.edu](mailto:sakai@rutgers.edu) or call them at 848 445 8721 between 8am-6pm on Monday through Friday.

- Student wellness services are available to you at Rutgers. You can contact CAPS for **mental health support** at [rhscaps.rutgers.edu](http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu) or by phone at 848 932 7884. Free and confidential **peer counselling** is available from **Scarlet Listeners** at 732 247 5555.
- The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling, and advocacy for victims of **sexual and relationship violence**. You can reach VPVA at [vpva.rutgers.edu](http://vpva.rutgers.edu) and 848 932 1181.
- The Office of Disability Services can be reached for help with accommodation and facilities for **students with disabilities** at [ods.rutgers.edu](http://ods.rutgers.edu), or by phone at 848 445 6800.
- On occasion, the university may have to **cancel classes** due to inclement weather. To check if classes are canceled, visit [campusstatus.rutgers.edu](http://campusstatus.rutgers.edu) or call 732-932-7799.

### Course Outline

The course schedule is subject to change: materials may be added or replaced during the semester based on relevant current events, new research, and student interests. If that happens, the changes will be reflected on the Sakai website and announced in class/over email.

Date	Topic	To Do
01. Jan 19 (Thu)	Course overview	Show up.
02. Jan 23 (Mon)	Key theories I ( <i>understanding social media</i> )	Ellison, N. B., & boyd, d. (2013). Sociality through social network sites. <i>Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies</i> .
03. Jan 26 (Thu)	Key theories II ( <i>understanding technology</i> )	<b>Join Facebook group. Create Twitter account.</b> Baym, N. (2015). <i>Personal connections in the digital age</i> . Ch.2 Making new media make sense
04. Jan 30 (Mon)	Self-presentation ( <i>identity management</i> )	Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. <i>New media &amp; society</i> .
05. Feb 2 (Thu)	The attention economy ( <i>focus &amp; information overload</i> )	Webster, J.G. (2014) <i>The marketplace of attention: How audiences take shape in a digital age</i> . Ch.1 The marketplace of attention
06. Feb 6 (Mon)	Information management I ( <i>privacy &amp; anonymity</i> )	boyd, d. (2014). <i>It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens</i> . Ch.2 Privacy: Why do youth share so publicly?

07. Feb 9 (Thu)	Information management II ( <i>deception &amp; credibility</i> )	Hancock, J., & Woodworth, M. (2013). An "Eye" for an "I": The Challenges and Opportunities for Spotting Credibility in a Digital World. In <i>Applied Issues in Investigative Interviewing, Eyewitness Memory, &amp; Credibility Assessment</i> .
08. Feb 13 (Mon)	Social relationships ( <i>online &amp; offline ties</i> )	Baym, N. (2015) <i>Personal connections in the digital age</i> . Ch.6 Digital media in everyday relationships.
09. Feb 16 (Thu)	Social networks I ( <i>structure &amp; function</i> )	Christakis: <a href="#">The chemistry of social ties</a> video Easley, D., & Kleinberg, J. (2010). <i>Networks, Crowds, and Markets: Reasoning About a Highly Connected World</i> . Ch.1 Overview.
10. Feb 20 (Mon)	Social networks II ( <i>diffusion &amp; influence</i> )	Valente, T. (2010). <i>Social Networks and Health: Models, Methods, and Applications</i> . Ch.1 Introduction + skim through Ch.5 Centrality.
11. Feb 23 (Thu)	Social capital ( <i>the value of relationships</i> )	Ellison, N., Lampe, C., Steinfeld, C., & Vitak, J. (2011). With a little help from my friends. <i>A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites</i> .
12. Feb 27 (Mon)	<b>Wrap-up and exam review</b>	Be prepared to ask questions about the exam!
13. Mar 2 (Thu)	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>Bring pencils, eraser, an ID, &amp; your RU ID #</b>
14. Mar 6 (Mon)	Online politics ( <i>messaging &amp; participation</i> )	Kreiss, D. (2014). Seizing the moment: The presidential campaigns' use of Twitter during the 2012 electoral cycle. <i>New Media &amp; Society</i> .
15. Mar 9 (Thu)	Social causes & movements ( <i>mobilization &amp; engagement</i> )	Jenkins, H., Shresthova, H., Gamber-Thompson, L., Kligler-Vilenchik, N. Zimmerman, A. (2016). <i>By Any Media Necessary</i> . Ch.1 Youth Voice, Media, and Political Engagement <b>p.17-39</b>
16. Mar 20 (Mon)	Spreadable media ( <i>sharing and remix</i> )	Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2013). <i>Spreadable media: Creating value and meaning in a networked culture</i> . Ch.5 Designing for Spreadability.
17. Mar 23 (Thu)	Opinion formation ( <i>persuasion &amp; algorithms</i> )	Pariser, E. (2011). <i>The filter bubble: How the new personalized web is changing what we read and how we think</i> . Ch. 4 The you loop.



18. Mar 27 (Mon)	Audiences and analytics ( <i>using digital methods</i> )	Schober, M. F., Pasek, J., Guggenheim, L., Lampe, C., & Conrad, F. G. (2016). Social Media Analyses for Social Measurement. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> .
19. Mar 30 (Thu)	<b>NO CLASS: project work</b> ( <i>groups meet &amp; discuss</i> )	Groups meet (offline or online) to prepare an outline of their final project.
20. Apr 3 (Mon)	<b>In-class project work</b> ( <i>in-class collaboration</i> )	Outline discussion. Come prepared with issues/questions about the project.
21. Apr 6 (Thu)	News and information I ( <i>media &amp; journalism</i> )	Pew Research (2015) <a href="#">The Evolving Role of News on Twitter and Facebook</a> .
22. Apr 10 (Mon)	News and information II ( <i>rumors &amp; misinformation</i> )	Bell, E. (2016). <a href="#">Facebook can no longer be 'I didn't do it' boy of global media</a> . <i>CJR</i> . Leetaru, K. (2016) <a href="#">Facebook's fake news detector and the myth of technology as savior</a> . <i>Forbes Mag</i> .
23. Apr 13 (Thu)	Organizations and groups ( <i>enterprise &amp; niche social media</i> )	Ellison, N. B., Gibbs, J. L., & Weber, M. S. (2015). The Use of Enterprise Social Network Sites for Knowledge Sharing in Distributed Organizations. <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i> .
24. Apr 17 (Mon)	Digital harassment ( <i>the dark side of social media</i> )	Konnikova, M. (2015) <a href="#">How the Internet Has Changed Bullying</a> . <i>The New Yorker</i> . Ronson, J. (2015) <a href="#">How One Stupid Tweet Blew Up Justine Sacco's Life</a> . <i>New York Times Mag</i> .
<b>Apr 19 (Wed)</b>	<b>Final projects due</b>	<b>Launch group project &amp; submit report on Sakai</b>
25. Apr 20 (Thu)	<b>Project presentations</b>	Be ready to present your project!
26. Apr 24 (Mon)	<b>Project presentations</b>	Be ready to present your project!
27. Apr 27 (Thu)	<b>Project presentations</b>	Be ready to present your project!
28. May 1 (Mon)	<b>Wrap-up and exam review</b>	Be prepared to ask questions about the exam!
<b>May 4 (Thu)</b>	<b>Final exam at 9:30am</b>	<b>Bring pencils, eraser, an ID, &amp; your RU ID #</b>