



COMM 3820: Social Media Perspectives

Dr. Lori Byers

Fall 2026

MW 2:20 – 3:40

Office Hours: GAB 332, MW 8:15 am – 9:15 am and by appointment

Contact via Canvas

Course description:

Examination of how emerging communication tools and technologies change the nature of human communication. Provides a socio-historical understanding of the changing nature of media technology and the rise of social media as well as an exploration of driving factors and future trends in social media development.

Course aspirations:

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

- 1) Understand the evolution, reach, and impact of social media over time.
- 2) Articulate the importance of and practice digital literacy across digital communication contexts and tools.
- 3) Explain thoroughly communication concepts related to social media.
- 4) Recite and explain theories relevant to social media and its implications and effects.
- 5) Recognize and practice ethical and responsible digital citizenry.
- 6) Understand and demonstrate best practices and responsible stewardship in social media strategy and content curation.

Course assignments:

Unannounced Quizzes and Class Assignments (10 X 10 points = 100 points)

We will have unannounced reading quizzes (usually at the beginning of class) and preannounced class assignments.

Social Dilemma Documentary Analysis Paper (100 points)

After watching the Social Dilemma documentary, write a paper analyzing the information and advancing the conversation in any way you choose. In this essay, at a minimum you should:

1. summarize the documentary's main points;
2. discuss your thoughts and feelings concerning the documentary content and the way it is presented;
3. supplement the information presented in the documentary to advance the discussion in more depth regarding at least three of the documentary's main points;
4. contribute additional points that should be included if the documentary were made today;
5. incorporate a minimum of 5 credible and/or academic sources to supplement and advance your essay discussion.

For every essay assignment, you must BOTH submit your essay directly into the text box AND submit the formatted document as a text file.

Storytelling in Social Media Analysis Project (100 points)

This project provides the opportunity to analyze the role of effective storytelling on social media accounts. You should choose at least three accounts to analyze so that you are able to show how social media can both succeed and fail in telling a compelling and relatable stories over time.

1. How do accounts successfully use storytelling to advance their message and brand?
2. How does storytelling contribute to concepts such as viral posts, social contagion, diffusion of innovations, branding, and overall engagement?
3. How do accounts fail to use storytelling? What are the outcomes of failed storytelling?
4. Successful projects will thoroughly explain and provide screenshots as evidence.
5. Successful projects will include a minimum of ten additional sources beyond the course readings to advance your knowledge of storytelling in social media contexts.

Personal Online Brand Statement/Essay/Presentation/LinkedIn development (100 points)

A personal brand is your promise to the world. It's a promise to your friends, family and other associates of who you are and who you actively aspire to be.

It is often very difficult to articulate who we are, who we aspire to be, and the values that guide us in a way that is concise and clear. This assignment offers you a terrific opportunity to practice this important skill.

1. Create your own personal online brand: Reflecting on what you learned from course readings on branding and PowerPoint, create your own personal brand in 1-2 paragraphs.
2. This statement should be something you are able to post at the top of your social media accounts and/or to begin to develop your LinkedIn account.
3. Write an essay explaining your brand statement.
 - A. How does this brand represent who you already are? Give specific examples from your life to explain.
 - B. How does this brand represent who you aspire to be in the future? Explain in detail.
 - C. How does will this brand help inform you as you create your online identity and legacy?
 - D. Include specific examples of content that you will include on your account(s) to reflect your brand. Create the content!
 - E. Which pieces of advice from each reading and from the PowerPoint helped inform you to conceptualize and articulate your brand? Apply course readings to your personal brand development.
 - F. Bring in at least 5 additional outside credible sources that helped guide you to create your personal brand. What information from each of these sources helped you develop your personal brand?
 - G. You will both write a paper and provide a recorded online presentation of this assignment.

For every essay assignment, you must BOTH submit your essay directly into the text box AND submit the formatted document as a text file.

Final Project tailored to your interests (100 points)

The final project in this course should be something you are able to add to your professional portfolio and reflect your own interests. You may create a detailed social media plan for a locally owned business or nonprofit agency, you may write a research paper, you could create a (very detailed) graphic novel or comic, or you may pursue a project that reflects your creativity that also illustrates what you've learned in this course.

1. You will submit a proposal that outlines your plan for the project and explain how this project will enrich your understanding of social media and course concepts.
2. You may not turn in a project that you've submitted in another course.

For example, if you choose to create a social media plan, your project could include the following:

1. Complete a social media strategy that solves a local problem.
2. Your project should detail the problem and its specific needs, explain why they need your help, and include an outline of what you plan to do.
3. Your plan should include outside sources to justify your intended direction.
4. Your social media plan should include, at a minimum:
 - Your account's business goals relevant to your project;
 - Your target audience, explained;
 - An analysis of the organization's existing social accounts with examples/screenshots included;
 - A proposed social media persona for the organization's accounts;
 - Suggested social media content with examples and justifications for the content;
 - A social media calendar that includes the actual examples of posts/videos/photos/captions/etc.;
 - Suggestions for future content and future trends that include explanation, justification, and visual examples/mock-ups;
 - Credible sources to justify all choices (minimum of 10).

Course Grading:

Grading Distribution:

- A: 90-100% (Outstanding, excellent work. The student performs well above the minimum criteria.)
- B: 80-89% (Good, impressive work. The student performs above the minimum criteria.)
- C: 70-79% (Solid, college-level work. The student meets the criteria of the assignment.)
- D: 60-69% (Below average work. The student fails to meet the minimum criteria.)
- F: 59 and below (Sub-par work. The student fails to complete the assignment.)

Grade distribution:

A	=	450 – 500 points
B	=	400 – 449 points
C	=	350 – 399 points
D	=	300 – 349 points
F	=	0 – 299 points

Policy statements:

This syllabus is subject to change and is not a contract.

Course Accessibility

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing a reasonable academic accommodations must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the student will request their letter of accommodation. ODA will provide faculty with a reasonable accommodation letter via email to begin a private discussion regarding a student's specific needs in a course. Students may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding their accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website.

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Violations of this policy may result in failure of the assignment and even failure of the course.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to the UNT Learning Management System (LMS) for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Discussing issues related to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Texas

Texas Senate Bill 17, the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, *does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas*. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and *students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion*.

Basic Needs Security

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their academic performance is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support (940-565-2648). UNT has both a Food Pantry and a “Seeking Options & Solutions” (SOS) team who work to help students navigate diverse concerns, including identifying resources for personal, academic, financial, and social issues.

Recording Class

Privacy is considered a basic classroom right in this course. This course will encourage open and robust discussions on issues and ideas without fear that any statements made will be used for inappropriate or retaliatory purposes. To ensure the comfort and protection of everyone in our classroom, recording of any kind is prohibited in this space (this includes audio recordings, live-streaming, photographs of course materials, etc.) unless a student has an approved accommodation from the Office of Disability Access (ODA). In such cases, all students in the course will be notified whenever recording will be taking place.

AI Clause (as part of larger Academic Integrity policy)

The goal of higher education is to become better thinkers and better writers. Both of these skills require development and practice. Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for my fair evaluation of your work. All work submitted in this course must be your own. Contributions from anyone or anything else- including AI sources, **must be properly quoted and cited every time they are used** (including any AI generated material). Failure to do so constitutes an academic integrity violation, and I will follow UNT’s policy in those instances. AI tools such as ChatGPT, QuillBot, Grammarly Premium have their place in helping to make our lives easier; these tools can also hurt your capacity to engage in critical thinking. Please talk with me before using any of these tools for this class to ensure that we’re in agreement as to how they will affect your work to avoid failure of assignments or failure of the course.

Academic Support:

1. I am here for you. I actively advocate for your success in this course. Make an appointment with me, e-mail me, visit during office hours, or make an appointment online or in person. I want to help resolve issues & questions.
2. Take advantage of the writing lab – you’ve already paid for this service. This is great place to talk about ideas, improve the organization of your paper, or work on your writing skills. Check the Writing Center website for more information about hours, request an appointment, or find out how to receive feedback on your writing online. You can also contact them at 940-565-2563, e-mail: WritingLab@unt.edu, visit them in Sage Hall 150 to set up an appointment, or go during walk-in hours at Willis 250.
3. UNT offers SO many resources for you to succeed. Please become familiar with the many services available to you (especially the Counseling Center and the Learning Center).