

## **COMM 3820: Social Media Perspectives**

**Dr. Lori Byers**

**Summer 2026**

### **Course description:**

The content in COMM 3820 examines 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, and explores driving factors and future trends in social media development.

### **Course aspirations:**

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

- understand the evolution, reach, and impact of social media over time;
- articulate the importance of and practice digital literacy across digital communication contexts and tools;
- explain thoroughly communication concepts related to social media;
- recite and explain theories relevant to social media and its implications and effects;
- recognize and practice ethical and responsible digital citizenry;
- articulate the contradictory nature of social media practice and issues;
- understand and demonstrate best practices and responsible stewardship in social media strategy and content curation.

Note: Syllabi are not contracts and remain open to revision at any point in the semester.

## Course assignments:

### **#1: Weekly discussions over the readings (each Sunday for your contribution, responses due by Wednesday mornings, 50 points)**

Each week you will discuss something interesting about the past week's readings. I will assign you to groups. If you know people in the class who you want in your group, let me know immediately and I will accommodate you. I will provide questions related to the readings and also participate in your discussions.

### **#2: Storytelling in Social Media Analysis Paper/Project (Sunday, June 28, 50 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. Incorporate at least 5 credible sources to add depth and insight into your analysis by providing additional information to explain the success/failure of your chosen accounts and storytelling examples.

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 5 additional sources beyond the course readings to advance your knowledge of storytelling in social media contexts.

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

### **#3: Social Dilemma Documentary Analysis Paper (Monday, July 6, 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.**

#### **#4: Personal Online Brand Statement/Essay/Presentation (Sunday, July 12, 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.
  1. How does this brand represent who you already are? Give specific examples from your life to explain.
  2. How does this brand represent who you aspire to be in the future? Explain in detail.
  3. How does will this brand help inform you as you create your online identity and legacy?
  4. Include specific examples of content that you will include on your account(s) to reflect your brand. Create the content!
  5. 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.
  6. 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?
  7. 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.**

#### **#5: Influencer/Organization Brand Analysis Paper (Sunday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 100 points)**

Branding is everything. The way an organization or influencer portrays their personality, their relationship to their followers/customers, their values, and their strategies all (should) compose a cohesive story that represents a clear and consistent brand.

For this analysis, you will dissect an organization or an influencer's brand and all the ways that brand is portrayed in their online presence.

1. How do their online accounts represent their brand? Give an abundance of specific examples/screenshots to explain.
2. How do they build their brand through storytelling? Go into much detail here.

3. What happens when an organization or influencer betrays their own brand expectations? Explain in detail with specific examples/screenshots.
4. 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?

**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: Problem-Solving Social Media Plan (Friday, July 24, 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 will create a detailed social media plan for a locally owned business or nonprofit agency that solves some type of problem for the organization. For example, the problem could be attracting more followers, increasing traffic to an event, or a campaign that helps establish the organization's identity/brand. This must be a real business with social media accounts willing to work with you.

You should choose this organization within the first week of class so you are able to work with them all summer.

1. You will submit a proposal in the second week that outlines your plan for the project and explain how this project will enrich your understanding of social media and course concepts and how you will help this business.
2. You may not turn in a project that you've submitted in another course.
3. Complete a social media strategy that solves a local problem.
4. 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.
5. Your plan should include outside sources to justify your intended direction.
6. 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 and add additional understanding to the issues faced by your client (minimum of 10).

Please feel free to reach out to me to run ideas by me. A Zoom meeting might be helpful – I am always willing to share ideas and provide clarification.

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

## **Grading Distribution:**

- A: 90-100% (Outstanding, excellent work. The student performs **well above** the minimum criteria. The student turns in work that stand out from the others.)
- B: 80-89% (Good, solid, 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-pin work that stand out from othersar work. The student fails to complete the assignment.)

A = 450 – 500 points

B = 400 – 449 points

C = 350 – 399 points =

D = 300 – 349 points

F = 000 – 299 points

**Please note: Students must complete ALL assignments to pass this course. Professional and personal success necessitates you complete all obligations.**

**Due to the inherent time challenges of the summer session, late work will not be accepted without university excused documentation from the Dean of Student’s office.**

## **Policy Statements**

### **Course Accessibility**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing 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 should arrange 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 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](mailto: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).

### **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.

### **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*.

### **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.

### **A.I. Clause (as part of larger Academic Integrity policy)**

The goal of higher education is to become better thinkers and better writers. Both skills require development and practice and prove essential to professional success. 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, etc. have their place in helping to make our lives easier and advancing learning; these tools can also hurt your capacity to engage in critical thinking and developing other skills fundamental to your professional and personal success. **Talk with me before using any of these tools for this class to ensure that we remain in agreement as to how they will affect your work to avoid failure of assignments or failure of the course.**