OVERVIEW

The emergence of social media has democratized mass communication in a way never before observed. Social media can include, but is not limited to, social networking, podcasting, video sharing, blogging, social bookmarking, wikis and other collaborative content creation platforms. Today with platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, everyone can be a correspondent, a writer, a social commentator, a film maker, a television star, documentarian, or pundit. Individuals can and do connect with people they would otherwise never encounter large numbers of people. Social media can be and has been an instrument of considerable social persuasion, influence, education, and politicization. It can also serve as a powerful tool for organizations—be they non-profit, government, or for-profit—to promote their products, services, or mission. Social media can also be employed to manage organizational crises, natural disasters, and the oft-disregarded and underestimated customer feedback phenomenon.

This course will explore and investigate the social or human dimensions of social media with respect to analyzing human behavior. We will study social network analysis (SNA), including factors such as influence and centrality, information diffusion, and
social contagion— including why certain content ‘goes viral.’ We will investigate the actual content communicated through use of topic modeling and sentiment analysis. Students will learn to use languages such as Python and R and programs such as Gephi and Excel to analyze social media data.

**COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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

1. Effectively use various social media tools and strategies as a tool of strategic communication and intra- and inter-organizational effectiveness, including crisis management and neutralizing negative online customer feedback.
2. Develop and analyze models of social media strategy effectiveness, and provide actionable insights from social media data and network visualizations.
3. Exploit the concepts and theories of sociology, social psychology, and communication that inform the strategic professional use of social media.
4. Employ technologically-sophisticated and in-demand programs, software, and tools to exploit strategic use of social media.
5. Develop basic competence in using sophisticated data collection, visualization, and analytical tools for social media analysis.

**PHILOSOPHY**

This course will be applied and interactive. Because most students enrolled in this course lack sufficient experience with various techniques, programs or languages, and platforms, “Homework Help Guides” will accompany assigned work. These guides have been developed to integrate and facilitate students’
simultaneous learning of analytical concepts and techniques, and the application of the requisite tools critical to digital communication analysts. As students, you are encouraged to apply your real-world professional experience to the learning process throughout the course. Further, any previous coursework in business-related fields such as sales and marketing or advertising, and in human behavior, such as sociology, psychology, and social psychology will be immensely useful as you build your skills in analytical thinking and practice these new techniques.

**PREREQUISITES:** Graduate standing.

**COURSE STRUCTURE:**

This online course consists of pre-recorded lectures, readings, discussions, written assignments, and weekly check-ins with the instructor. The lectures will introduce the principles, tools, and professional applications of strategic social media application and analytics. Pre-recorded lectures from developers of various analytics tools will supplement the instructor’s lectures. Other course activities are opportunities to apply those principles and tools. Students will learn how to collect and translate digital content into data that can be used to enhance decision-making by marketers, advertisers, and public relations and social media professionals, researchers, as well as many others.

Students are required to keep up with readings and recorded lectures, to turn in all assigned work on time, and actively engage in the eight Blackboard forum discussions. Your final grade is based on the total score of 1,000 possible points allocated as follows:

- Student E-lab book - 2 reviews @ 35pts ea (70)
- Student Data Analysis & Presentation (150)
- Report Assignments 3 @100pts ea (300)
Blackboard student forum- 8 @ 50pts ea  (400)
Weekly Check-ins with instructor 8 @ 10pts ea  (80)

1000 points

REQUIRED READINGS:

By Dipanjan Sarkar
ISBN: 9781484223871

By Mary Chayko

By Susan T. (Tufts) Fiske & Shelley E. Taylor

Manoj Morais & Sreekumar Radhakrishna Pillai

Additional required reading may be on Blackboard.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

This course is 100% online with specific due dates that must be met regardless of whether or not the university campus is open or closed. This is not an independent study course. A fundamental aspect of online instruction is the expectation and requirement that
students coordinate their coursework requirements with their personal and professional schedules and obligations. Failure to meet course obligations will result in loss of points and potentially dissatisfactory course status.

Students are expected to submit all coursework by the due date. Unless otherwise stated by the instructor, all assignments are to be uploaded in Blackboard by 11:59 pm on the due date.

All assignments and written work must be submitted in a .doc, .docx, or the open source Libre Office’s .odf file type. No other file types will be accepted unless otherwise stated by the instructor. A first violation of this policy will result in a 50% deduction of the total value of the assignment before grading begins. Any further violations will result in a grade of “0” and the assignment will not be graded. All written work should be typed in 12-point New Times Roman font and double-spaced unless otherwise indicated by the instructor.

**Academic Fraud and Dishonesty**

Honesty, integrity, and professionalism are essential to success in business and academic environments. Because of the potential for grievous consequences connected with dishonesty, fraud, or misrepresented work products in the field of analytics, serious repercussions are mandated for students who choose to cheat, deceive, misrepresent or misappropriate materials, ideas, or content for their own work.

Therefore, to minimize the opportunity for such behavior while providing students with the chance to recognize borderline or questionable choices, Turnitin, the Internet-based plagiarism prevention service will be used in this course to verify and validate all work. Students will have an opportunity to correct suspect any content identified by Turnitin in their written work. Students should therefore not wait until 15 minutes or less before submitting any
assignment as it will have to be processed and screened by the service before it is posted in Blackboard. Students are responsible for the content of their work once it is posted in Blackboard.

Students suspected of committing academic fraud on the first offense will be subjected to the full discipline of the Mayborn School of Journalism, The Toulouse Graduate School and the University of North Texas. The University of North Texas’ policy on academic fraud is available at https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.003_StudentStandardsOfAcademicIntegrity_8_2017.pdf. It is a condition of enrollment and participation in this course that all students will read this policy, understand and accept the policy.

Netiquette

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats.

Here are some important netiquette guidelines from UNT CLEAR:

• Remember you are communicating with a human being.
• Behave online in the same way that you would in-person.
• Communication in the online classroom is different from other places in cyberspace.
• Respect other's time and bandwidth: be concise.
• Make yourself look good by using proper grammar and punctuation.
• Share your knowledge.
• Keep flame wars from escalating.
• Respect the privacy of your classmates.
• If you have advanced IT skills, don't abuse your power.
• Be kind when addressing others' mistakes.
• Follow the Golden Rule
COURSEWORK

Weekly Check-ins (8 @ 80 points total)

Because research studies conducted on online education consistently reveal that distance education students typically feel isolated and alone, this course makes use of weekly Blackboard IM (Instant Messaging) video chats between each student and the instructor. Each week students are expected to contact the instructor via BB IM during office hours or by email or virtual appointment to apprise the instructor of the following: 1) their progress in the course thus far; 2) any worries or concerns about the coursework and requirements for it; 3) the need for individual tutoring; 4) personal emergencies or issues that may hinder the student’s ability to successfully complete all coursework on time as assigned; 5) additional resources or assistance the student may require; and, 6) any other issues as needed. Students will be awarded points for meeting this requirement. Students who fail to fulfill all eight check-ins will lose points. Also, students who complete all check-ins may be granted consideration if they are reasonably close to the next higher letter grade.

Blackboard Weekly Activities

Student E-lab book (2 code reviews @ 70 points total)

To support students’ active learning of programs and analytical techniques as well as future career ambitions, all students will be expected to create a n E-lab book. Code, coding comments, why steps were taken and the results of those steps, as well as any
diagrams or other content that students use in their programming and analyses should be saved as an E-lab book in the Blackboard link to Microsoft’s One Note software. There is full tutorial on the use of One Note contained in the opening page of the software.

A student’s E-lab book should be saved in the following example format: “Johnson, Susan JOUR 5330 E-lab book.” At weeks four and seven of the course, students should be prepared for the instructor to review, evaluate and grade the content. Students’ code from their three “Report Assignments” will provide much of the content for this lab book, and students will add the code from their “Student Data Analysis and Presentation” project by the end of the course. Successfully completing the E-lab book is a condition of passing the course. Examples of E-lab books will be available on Blackboard for students to review.

**Blackboard Student Forum (8 @ 50 points total)**

Each week to promote students’ critical thinking and decision-making skills concerning the application of analytic techniques to social media, there will be an examination of a social media analytics question or problem. In some instances, a visualization will be posted and students will be asked to analyze it or proffer an alternative? Other times, students may be asked to develop a strategy or solution to a question or problem. Whatever the topic, the forum gives students the opportunity to exercise skills in brief problem-solving scenarios.

There are two requirements for this forum. First, each student must post a minimum of 100 words and a maximum of 200 words in response to the instructor’s posted material. This is called the “Applied post” and should be so labeled by each student every week. The Applied post should respond critically to the points or questions posed by the instructor. Use APA or ASA style references and in-text citations to support your ideas. The second
part of each weekly post means that each student must respond to at least one fellow student’s Applied post. This response post, should be labeled, “Critique post” and should be a minimum of 100 words and a maximum of 200 words in which the student evaluates (using his or her professional experience, and if so desired, references using APA or ASA style references and in-text citations of scholarly, professional, or trade publications as support) the other student’s Applied post. Bear in mind that references are not part of the word count. Examples of critiquing include explaining how they would improve on the fellow student’s applied post recommendations and why or noting what alternatives might be tried/implemented and why. Statements such as "I agree with X" or "I found the X very interesting" are meaningless and are unacceptable for any assignments in this course. You must provide specific evidence that shows why you feel or think as you do. Creativity will be rewarded as will critical thinking and original solutions. All applied and critique posts must be completed no later than Wednesday each week by 11:59pm. If students do not complete the forum requirements, they will not receive full credit for the written assignment tied to the forum.

**Written Assignments**

**Report Assignments (3 @ 300 points total)**

To give students the opportunity to test social media analytics’ theories and techniques, students will prepare three reports analyzing social media data. A template for these reports will be provided in Blackboard and students will be shown how to collect social media data, organize and code it, and analyze it, including the use of data visualizations. These reports will consist of 5-7 double-spaced pages plus references and a cover page. All the computer/software code that students use to create these analyses should be saved in a separate document called a “E-lab book” so that the instructor can review it. Also, this allows
students to build a portfolio of work to show to current and future employers, and provides them with code and templates for their future analyses in school and work.

**Student Data Analysis & Presentation (150 points)**

During the course, each student will develop their analytical and critical thinking skills as well as their ability to present analytical findings to non-analyst stakeholders by reviewing and analyzing either a case study or a dataset. Students will then present their findings through a written report as well as a live or pre-recorded 10-15-minute presentation of their findings. The student may choose whether to pre-record their presentation or to gain the experience of a live presentation before stakeholders. Since this assignment is intended to hone your professional analytical skills, you must prepare and present your analysis as if you are presenting results to a client. It is therefore essential that your presentation makes use of simple and easy to interpret/read data visualizations and that the overall language used in the presentation is easy to understand by non-analysts. All the computer/software code that students use to create this analysis should be saved to students’ “E-lab book” so that the instructor can review it.

**Project considerations when analyzing the data:**

1) What immediately ‘grabs’ you in the data? What secondary impressions do you get beyond any immediately apparent observations? Ultimately, what are the takeaways you can find in these data?
2) Which metrics would you identify as being most critical to examine in this case or for these data?
3) Identify both the best and worst performers. Describe how you could apply your findings to a future campaign.

**Presentation Guidelines:**
1) Presentations, whether live or pre-recorded, should be no less than 10 minutes and no more than 15 minutes.

2) All presentations should be prepared using Power Point or open source software Libre Office Suite’s presentation program called Impress, which can be found at https://www.libreoffice.org/discover/impress/. Presentations should consist of 6-8 slides including 1 cover slide and 1 reference slide. The other 4-6 slides should include the following content: summary of the problem with the case or dataset, outline of your conclusions, and an explanation of how you arrived at those conclusions, and at least 1 data visualization.
COURSE SCHEDULE
(SUBJECT TO CHANGE BY INSTRUCTOR)

WEEK ONE/MODULE ONE: “Introduction to Social Media”
FB, Twitter, LinkedIn, & other formats
Pros & Cons of Social Media Data
Reading: Chayko chapters 3-8 (these are very short chapters)
Introductory post with biography due Thursday. Response to at least one other student by Sunday.
Weekly Blackboard student forum #1 posts due Wednesday, 10/25 & Sunday, 10/29.
Weekly check-in due by 10/29.

WEEK TWO/MODULE ONE Continued
Relevant theories from sociology, social psychology, & mass communication
Social media users’ demographics
Weekly Blackboard student forum #2 posts due Wednesday, 11/1 & Sunday, 11/5.
Weekly check-in due by 11/5.

WEEK THREE/MODULE TWO: “Strategic Communication Theories”
Theories from sociology, social psychology, & mass communication relating to social media
Reading: Fiske & Taylor chapters 7 & 9.
“Mass Communication Theories Part
Weekly Blackboard student forum #3 posts due Wednesday, 11/8 & Sunday, 11/12.
Weekly check-in due by 11/12.

WEEK FOUR/MODULE TWO Continued
Reading:
Assignment 2: Social Media Report. Due this Sunday
Weekly Blackboard student forum #4 posts due Wednesday, 11/15 & Sunday, 11/19.
Weekly check-in due by 11/19.
Prepare One Note E-lab book for review by Sunday, 11/19.
WEEK FIVE/MODULE THREE: “Theories & Frameworks of Social Media Analytics”
Models & frameworks to explain social media activities (e.g., SNA, collective behavior, etc.)
Reading: "Introduction to Social Networks & Their Analysis"
“Analyzing Twitter and its Networks”
“Introduction to Facebook Analysis”
Weekly Blackboard student forum #5 posts due Wednesday & Sunday
Weekly check-in due between Thursday & Friday Go to Meeting Chat

WEEK SIX/MODULE THREE: Continued
Introduction to Data Collection Tools for Social Media Analytics
Reading: announced in Blackboard
Assignment 3: Data Collection assignment. Due this Sunday.
Weekly Blackboard student forum #6 posts due Wednesday & Sunday
Weekly check-in due between Thursday & Friday Go to Meeting Chat

WEEK SEVEN/MODULE FOUR: “Social Media Text Analytic Models & Techniques”
Reading: announced in Blackboard
Weekly Blackboard student forum #7 posts due Wednesday & Sunday
Weekly check-in due between Thursday & Friday Go to Meeting Chat

WEEK EIGHT/MODULE FOUR: Continued
Reading announced in Blackboard
Assignment: Student Data Analysis & Presentation Due—presentations will be staggered throughout the week. Report due by Sunday.
Weekly Blackboard student forum #8 posts due Wednesday & Saturday
Students must share their Google Drive E-lab book by Friday
Weekly check-in due between Thursday & Friday Go to Meeting Chat