**JCM650 - Social Media Research**

**Fall 2018 - Monday 3:15pm-5:45pm  
Reese Phifer 104D**

**Instructor:**

Dr. Elliot Panek

Office location and hours: Reese-Phifer 430B; M 12:00pm-3:00pm

Contact: epanek@ua.edu (USE THIS EMAIL ADDRESS ONLY!!!)

**Course Description & Objectives**

This course is designed to familiarize students with the foundational theories, key findings, and current state of research on the uses and effects of social media. The course covers a wide range of sub-topics (e.g., social media and journalism, social media and persuasion, computer-mediated interpersonal relationships, self-presentation) from a range of theoretical perspectives (primarily drawn from the fields of psychology and sociology). The emphasis will be on empirical research from both qualitative and quantitative traditions. Though some fundamental theories and studies will form the core of the course, the rest of what we cover in readings, discussions, and assignments will be dictated by the interests of each student.

**Learning Objectives**

The goal of the course is to provide every student with a sense of what is already known about social media and how they might contribute to the public’s knowledge of this phenomenon via their research and teaching. After completing this course, you should be able to:

* Briefly lecture and lead a discussion relating to a particular social media sub-topic
* Author a comprehensive literature relating to a particular social media sub-topic
* Design a research study relating to a particular social media sub-topic
* Provide accurate, articulate, and comprehensive answers to questions from the general public about many aspects of the role of social media in our lives

**Course Requirements and Grading**

In-Class Participation 20%

Journal Entries 20%

Teaching Presentations 20%

Final Project 40%

**Grading Scale**

A+ 97.00-100.00%  
A 93.00-96.99%  
A- 90.00-92.99%  
B+ 87.00-89.99%  
B 83.00-86.99%  
B- 80.00-82.99%  
C+ 77.00-79.99%  
C 73.00-76.99%  
C- 70.00-72.99%  
D+ 67.00-69.00%  
D 63.00-66.99%  
D- 60.00-62.99%  
F 59.99 and below%

**In-Class Participation**

As this is a small class, it is expected that all students actively contribute to in-class discussions and exercises. It is also expected that students attend every class, as there are so few class sessions over the course of the semester. During class, you will be asked to write short responses, work with peers, and participate in discussions. Both the quantity and the quality of your work will determine your grade. Intelligent, good-natured debate will be a big part of this class, so I encourage you to participate in all discussions even if you’re typically shy or hold unpopular beliefs. Please be respectful of what other people have to say even if you find it boring or just plain wrong. Those who choose to use class time to use social media/shop/chat or use other digital technology in an unconstructive manner (unless, of course, it is part of an in-class exercise) will be marked absent for the day.

**Journal Entries**

These short, informal writing assignments will be given throughout the semester. In general, the journal entries are opportunities for you to reflect on the assigned readings and topics and apply what you have learned in class and in the readings to various media experiences. I don’t want a summary of the material so much as a critical application of the ideas presented in the texts and in-class lectures and discussions. Each entry should be 500-1000 words and must be posted on Blackboard.

**Teaching Presentations**

You will be asked to teach one class session this semester (actually, it will likely be 1/2 of a session). This will entail delivering a brief lecture and an interactive portion (leading a structured class discussion, group work, in-class activity). To prepare, you are expected to review widely-cited literature relating to your topic as well as recent literature and current events relating to your topic. You will then use this information as the basis for a compelling lecture and engaging interactive portion. To the extent that it is logistically possible, you will select a topic that interests you. Part of your grade for this assignment will be determined by peer evaluation.

**Final Projects**

Option 1: Research proposal  
You may create a proposal for an empirical study of some aspect of the uses and/or effects of social media. This proposal could serve as the basis for an eventual research paper that could be published in an academic journal, in the manner of a 'pre-registered report' (see example of such reports in the Journal of Media Psychology (https://us.hogrefe.com/fileadmin/user\_upload/global/journals/Hogrefe\_Publishing/Journal\_of\_Media\_Psychology/zmp\_author\_instructions\_general\_2018-01-29.pdf). You will not actually conduct the study (i.e., collect and analyze data). Instead, you will write an introduction, literature review, a description of the methods of data collection, and a plan for analyzing the data. Proposals must be 10-15 pages, double spaced, and should draw directly from what you learn in the class. We will work on various versions of your project throughout the semester.

Option 2: Literature Review  
You may write a thorough review of research on a particular aspect of social media that has not, as yet, been thoroughly reviewed in a previous publication. This is intended to serve as a the basis of a published academic article or book chapter. Papers must be 15-25 pages, double spaced, and should draw directly from what you learn in the class. We will work on various versions of your project throughout the semester.

**Late Work & Absences**

Students are expected to attend every class, though I understand that this may not always be possible. If you are able to produce a documented reason for missing class, you will be exempt from class participation for that day and you will be given an extension for written assignments (journal entries and final projects). Eligible reasons for absences are: illness; death in the family; job interview; school-sanctioned event that cannot be re-scheduled. Eligible reasons do not include: transportation problems. In the event that you are absent during your scheduled day to teach, I will teach your portion of the class session and you will be asked to complete an alternative assignment (most likely recording a video lecture and submitting a lesson plan). Late journal entries will have 20 points deducted for each day they are late, with the exception of documented reasons for lateness (see above).

**Policies Regarding Academic Integrity**

Cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process will not be tolerated. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. In any written assignment, if you use or make reference to the ideas of others, they might be cited in some way. If you use or make reference to work you have completed earlier or are completing outside of this course, you must cite that work in some way (and, generally, you are discouraged from doing this, as it is typically considered 'self-plagiarism.'). Students who violate these rules on academic integrity are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of immediate failure of the course. If you are ever unsure whether something qualifies as a violation of the rules on academic integrity, please ask me about it.

**Disruptive Academic Behavior**

Disruptive academic behavior is any behavior likely to substantially or repeatedly interfere with the normal conduct of instructional activities, including meetings with instructors outside of class. Examples of such behavior include, but are not limited to, making loud or distracting noises; using cell phones and other electronic devices without prior approval; repeatedly speaking without being recognized; frequently arriving late or leaving early from class; and making threats or personal insults. A verbal expression of a disagreement with the instructor or other students on an academic subject matter discussed within the course, during times when the instructor permits discussion, is not in itself disruptive academic behavior. Any student who repeatedly disrupts the class can be removed from the course for the semester.

**Email Policy**

The best way to contact me is through email (epanek@ua.edu). DO NOT USE OTHER EMAIL ADDRESSES. Also, I do not check my email constantly! I check it once every week day. That means that if you email me Sunday-Thursday, you can expect some kind of response within 24 hours of sending your message. If you email me Friday-Saturday, you can expect to receive a reply on Monday. During holidays or Fall Break, expect that I will check my email on the day before classes at the University resume.

**Continuity of Instruction**

In the event that our class is suspended due to a catastrophic event I will strive to continue instruction to those that are able to participate. If and when it is suspended, you will receive an email from me and a Blackboard Announcement that detail how we will communicate, where you can locate course information and what you can expect during this time period. I realize that some of you may be affected by the event and not able to participate, however I will continue to provide instruction to those that are able to continue.

**Severe Weather Guidelines**

The guiding principle at The University of Alabama is to promote the personal safety of our students, faculty and staff during severe weather events. It is impossible to develop policies which anticipate every weather-related emergency. These guidelines are intended to provide additional assistance for responding to severe weather on campus.

UA is a residential campus with many students living on or near campus. In general classes will remain in session until the National Weather Service issues safety warnings for the city of Tuscaloosa. Clearly, some students and faculty commute from adjacent counties. These counties may experience weather related problems not encountered in Tuscaloosa. Individuals should follow the advice of the National Weather Service for that area taking the necessary precautions to ensure personal safety. Whenever the National Weather Service and the Emergency Management Agency issue a warning, people in the path of the storm (tornado or severe thunderstorm) should take immediate life saving actions.

When West Alabama is under a severe weather advisory, conditions can change rapidly. It is imperative to get to where you can receive information from the [National Weather Service](http://www.weather.gov/) and to follow the instructions provided. Personal safety should dictate the actions that faculty, staff and students take.

**The Office of University Relations will disseminate the latest information regarding conditions on campus in the following ways:**

* Weather advisory posted on the UA homepage
* Weather advisory sent out through UA Alerts to faculty, staff and students
* Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA at 90.7 FM
* Weather advisory broadcast over Alabama Public Radio (WUAL) at 91.5 FM
* Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA-TV/WUOA-TV, and on the website at <http://wvuatv.com/content/weather>. WVUA-TV Home Team Weather provides a free service you can subscribe to which allows you to receive weather warnings for Tuscaloosa via e-mail or cell phone. Check <http://wvuatv.com/content/free-email-weather-alerts> for more details and to sign up for weather alerts.

In the case of a tornado warning (tornado has been sighted or detected by radar; sirens activated), all university activities are automatically suspended, including all classes and laboratories. If you are in a building, please move immediately to the lowest level and toward the center of the building away from windows (interior classrooms, offices, or corridors) and remain there until the tornado warning has expired. Classes in session when the tornado warning is issued can resume immediately after the warning has expired at the discretion of the instructor. Classes that have not yet begun will resume 30 minutes after the tornado warning has expired provided at least half of the class period remains.

**Disability Statement**

If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability, but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, please call (205) 348-4285 (Voice) or (205) 348-3081 (TTY) or visit 133-B Martha Parham Hall East to register for services. Students who may need course adaptations because of a disability are welcome to make an appointment to see me during office hours. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services, 133-B Martha Parham Hall East, before receiving academic adjustments.

**Drop/Add/Withdrawal Policy**

Once you are registered in this course, it is your responsibility to attend the course, drop the course, or withdraw from the course. The last day to drop without received a ‘W’ is 8/29. Dropping and withdrawing are distinct actions that affect your course enrollment status. In either case, a form from the Registrar’s Office, with signatures, is required to change course enrollment status. There are billing, financial aid, and academic record effects for changes to your enrollment status in this course; therefore, you must attend to the proper procedure when dropping or withdrawing from a course. Please refer to the University’s drop/add/withdrawal policies and timelines on the Registrar’s website or contact your academic advisor.

**Blackboard Announcement**

Please see the announcements section of Blackboard for any important announcements regarding our course throughout the semester.

**Required Texts**

Two books are required for this course. You may obtain them at the SupeStore or in any other legal, ethical manner. Please make sure to obtain the proper edition. Additional readings will be made available through Blackboard.

Baym, N. K. *Personal Connections in the Digital Age, 2nd edition*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Joinson, A. N., McKenna, K. Y. A., Postmes, T., & Reips, U. *The Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

**Schedule**

**MAJOR COURSE CONTENT**

(Readings are to be completed prior to the class).

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| **In-Class Content & Dates** | **Readings** |
| **Session One —** 8/27  Introduction to the course | Baym Ch. 1 |
| **Session Two —** 9/10 How scholars study social media: Theories | Baym Ch. 2 & 3  Oxford Ch. 17 |
| **Session Three —** 9/17 How scholars study social media: Methods | Oxford Chs. 24, 26, & 31 |
| **Session Four —** 9/24  Identity | Baym Ch. 5  Oxford Chs. 14 & 15 |
| **Session Five —**  10/1  Trust & deception | Oxford Chs. 4, 5, & 19 |
| **Session Six —** 10/8 Groups | Oxford Chs. 8 & 9 Baym Ch. 4 |
| **Session Seven —** 10/15 Intimacy | Baym Ch. 6 Oxford Ch 3 |
| **Session Eight —**  10/22  Health & Wellbeing | Oxford Ch. 21, 22, & 10 |
| **Session Nine —** 10/29 Persuasion & social influence | Oxford Ch. 18 |
| **Session Ten —** 11/5 Social News & politics | Oxford Ch. 12 |
| **Session Eleven —** 11/12 Youth and development | TBD |
| **Session Twelve —** 11/19 Social gaming | TBD |
| **Session Thirteen —** 11/26 TBD |  |
| **Session Fourteen —** 12/3 Wrap-up |  |