COMM 3558 Social Media (OL)
School of Communication | Spring 2020 | Section 17352

Instructor: Dr. Teresa Lynch
E-mail: lynch.659@osu.edu
Physical Office: 3045D Derby Hall
Digital Office: Carmen Zoom Meeting Room (Links to an external site.)
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00pm – 2:30pm and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Kyla Brathwaite
E-mail: brathwaite.13@osu.edu
Physical Office: 3055 Derby Hall
Office Hours: 12pm – 1pm Tuesdays and Thursdays

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course functions to help students (1) acquire theoretical and practical knowledge about social media and (2) understand the ways in which social media influence individuals, groups, and society. Over the semester, we will discuss a range of topics related to social media. In this course, students will come to:

1. Understand implications of media becoming “social”
2. Increase their knowledge of the structure and governance of social media
3. Recognize strategies various entities (e.g., individuals, activists, organizations) adopt to use social media effectively
4. Learn about the characteristics, functionality, and usage of social media as distinct from traditional mass media and other forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC)

COURSE FORMAT

This course is an online course, which means that students will access 100% of the class material, activities, and assessments online via the Internet. No in-person meetings will take place.
COURSE MATERIALS

All required readings and materials will be accessible through our Carmen site via the Files section. You can also access readings and materials by clicking through the links in the course modules.

Access to a computer/laptop, a high-speed Internet connection, current web browser with video-related plugins, Microsoft Office (available to OSU student free of charge (Links to an external site.)), and speakers/headphones. Students should not attempt to complete this course using a smartphone. This course is exclusively online. As a result, you must be comfortable working more independently than in an in-person classroom and using your computer, web-browser, and navigating Carmen. Additionally, you must ensure that your computer functions properly and that you use some form of data redundancy (e.g., cloud backups or physical duplication). Please see the technology policy below for more details.

COURSE POLICIES

Communication policy: Because of the size of our class and its online nature, the communication policies serve to facilitate timeliness, collaboration, and simplicity. Please aim to adhere to the policy closely. Deviating from the policy may result in undue delays or us missing your messages altogether.

Things to avoid:

1. **Carmen mail/messenger & Carmen submission comments.** Both of these are unreliable and the instructors will not check them regularly.
2. **Weekend emails and messages sent around 5PM or later on weekdays.** Under most circumstances, we will respond to messages of this sort on the next business day.
3. **Sending emails that are not from your OSU email address.** Messages to our OSU accounts from non-OSU email services are regularly marked as spam and since their OSU cannot confirm their delivery, you may not use them as evidence of communication attempts.
4. **Unprofessional emails.** Please ensure that your email messages are professional and informative by including your course info in the subject line, a salutation, adequate yet concise body text, closing, and your full name.
5. **Emails that require immediate attention.** We aim to answer emails with 24 hours of receipt on business days. Be proactive and plan ahead.

Sources of course information: Because this is an online class, quick questions regarding the course cannot take place in person. Thus, I have set up a system for you to access various forms of information about the course. Start at the top of this list and work your way down to find answers to your questions. This will usually be the most efficient and quick way to get information about the course.

1. **First source for information:** Your first and most important resource are the course discussion boards available in Carmen, because it is likely that another student has asked your question and an instructor has already answered it. For general course
questions, use the General Course Questions discussion board. For assignment specific questions, use the specific discussion board for each assignment.

2. **Second source for information**: If you wish to remain anonymous or have sensitive questions, send your TA, Kyla Brathwaite, an email. In short, your TA is your lifeline for this course. Your TA will have an intimate knowledge of your work and should be your resource for all questions and concerns regarding content, class scheduling, accommodations, or any other class related issues not addressed in the discussion boards.

3. **Third source for information**: If after referencing the discussion board and contacting your TA you feel that you still have questions or concerns, you may email the professor: lynch.659@osu.edu

**Deadlines**: Assume that all deadlines are in Eastern Time (ET).

**Late work**: Students may submit all assessments except group discussions late with a penalty. Group discussion boards will close after the due date and, thus, this work must be completed within the week the discussion board is open and cannot be submitted late. Penalties for late work increase cumulatively. Submitting work 1 second after the deadline yields a -2.5% point penalty for the submission. For each additional hour after the deadline, you lose an additional -2.5% off the submission.

**Unenrollment**: OSU does not recognize unenrollment as a valid excuse for missing work. If you become unenrolled from the course for any reason, it is your responsibility to contact me and establish alternative means to submit work prior to the specified deadline. If you suspect that this policy will affect you, I recommend saving the syllabus to your local computer or printing it out for reference.

**Professionalism**: You must ensure that the work you submit is correct. Submitting files that are corrupt, the wrong version, the wrong format, missing components, the wrong file type, etc. is unprofessional. It is your responsibility to check on the integrity of your work immediately following submission. We will not inform you if your work fails these standards. If we cannot view your work, you will not receive credit for your submission. Standard lateness penalties apply to unprofessional work.

I will not tolerate disruptions to my online classroom including threatening behavior or inappropriate language/derogatory speech. I expect that all students in this course will maintain civility, professionalism, and decorum while in the classroom and in our online interactions. I reserve the right to dismiss any student who is non-compliant with this policy. Additionally, I reserve the right to report disruptive students to the Dean of Students and/or University Police.

**Technology**: Students must use technology outside of the classroom because this is an online delivered course. Students must regularly check their OSU email account, the Carmen course page for information, materials, updates, and to participate in group discussions. Students must maintain access to a computer/laptop, a high-speed Internet connection, current web browser with video-related plugins, and speakers/headphones throughout the course of the semester. The instructor will link lectures through the Carmen modules for each week.
For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at [https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours](https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours) (Links to an external site.), and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

Technical failure does not constitute an excuse for submitting work late. This rule is more important with online courses. You are, per course requirements, obligated to have regular access to a working computer/laptop and high-speed internet access. It is your responsibility to make sure your devices are in working order, which includes hardware and software. Technical problems which are documented by the University’s Office of the Chief Information Officer will be permitted as these are outside of your control. You can view the status of OSU’s systems on [this page](https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours) (Links to an external site.). If you experience a problem with an OSU system (email, Carmen) which OCIO have not reported, it will be your responsibility to raise a ticket with them. Only after they confirm your situation was out of your control will the instructor make an accommodation. Note that a situation like this is extremely rare. If you find yourself experiencing a technical issue that impacts your ability to take part in essential class activities, your first response should be to make alternate arrangements (e.g., a computer lab). You should email the course TA only when this is not possible.

Dr. Lynch will hold office hours through Ohio State’s conferencing platform, Carmen Zoom. Dr. Lynch’s digital meeting room can be accessed during posted office hours at this link: [https://osu.zoom.us/j/4327902829](https://osu.zoom.us/j/4327902829) (Links to an external site.). Students may use the audio and video functions if a webcam and microphone are available. If not, there is still a chat function within Carmen Zoom for the student to live chat with the professor in the virtual office hours room. A guide to accessing Carmen Zoom is available online here (Links to an external site.) and students can access support for Carmen Zoom here (Links to an external site.).

**Grade appeals:** You may send your TA an email to instigate a grade appeal within 1 week after the grade posting in Carmen. Appeals must have strong evidence-based arguments that reference specific components of the assignment’s grading criteria. Appeals can result in an unchanged grade, a higher grade, or a lower grade.

**Course leave:** If you become seriously ill or something happens to you that prevents you from participating in the course for an extended amount of time (e.g., mental illness, taking care of an immediate family member, childbirth, etc.), you may apply for course leave. You must let the instructor know of your situation as soon as practical when you become aware of the need for leave (either the day you learn of the need or the next workday). If you qualify for leave, we will allow you to make up missed work up to 7 days prior to your leave request. Be proactive and let us know as soon as possible if you think you need leave. We will not grant leave retroactively. For example, if you qualify for leave in week 2 but request leave in week 5, you cannot earn credit for work due in weeks 2 & 3. Course leave is similar to OSU’s Family and Medical Leave (FML; [see here for more information](https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours) (Links to an external site.)) and the instructor will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis.

**Peer interaction and public work:** The structure of this course incorporates public posting and peer interaction. If you are not comfortable with this, I recommend you drop this course as I will not make any accommodations to this structure.
**Tentative nature of syllabus:** This syllabus represents an agreement between the students and the instructor, Dr. Teresa Lynch. Students enrolled in this class agree to the terms of the syllabus and understand that the policies, schedule, and deadlines outlined within it are subject to the instructor’s modification with notice via Carmen to students.

**COURSE ASSESSMENTS**

**Exams:** Students will have the opportunity to take four exams through Carmen. I will drop the lowest exam grade, which means the cumulative final exam is technically optional. Each exam is worth 20% of the final grade for a total of 60% of the final course grade. I will administer three of the exams during the regular semester (weeks 5, 9, and 15). These three exams will cover only material in the unit of the course immediately prior to the exam. Administration of the final exam will occur during finals week. The final exam is cumulative (i.e., it will cover all course topics).

The exams will rigorously test your knowledge about the course topics. I have designed the exams to be difficult for two reasons. First, the difficulty will motivate you to keep up with the material each week and to study as you would for a standard, in-person exam. Second, all exams are open book and open notes. The exam material will come from the lectures and the assigned readings/materials. The exam questions are applied rather than definition-based. Exams may contain multiple-choice, true-false, and matching questions. Students will have 45 minutes to complete each exam and exams will contain approximately 25 questions. The time limit will greatly constrain the ability to look up individual answers. Students must be knowledgeable of the course material to perform well on the exam within the allotted time and must complete exams during the specified time window. Students will only have one attempt to complete each exam. I do not allow group work on the exams and doing so constitutes academic misconduct. Please prepare well and do not wait until the last minute to start an exam, as technological issues can occur (see technology policy below for more details). If students have questions about the exams generally, they should use the [General Exam Discussion Board](#) available in Carmen.

**Weekly Group Discussions:** During each week when there is not an exam, students will participate in online group discussions responding to an assigned prompt for the week. You can post your own original comment and, additionally, you can respond to others’ original comments. Ideally, you will be doing some combination of both (originating new comments in the discussion and responding) over the course of the semester. I will assign students randomly into groups of approximately 10 individuals. Group discussion participation constitutes 15% of the final grade. There are 10 opportunities to participate in the group discussions and each week will constitute 1.5% of the final grade. Grading is effort based. Do not wait until the last minute to post; this will negatively influence your participation grade. I expect each student to be actively involved on the discussion boards each week. In other words, posting one comment on each of your group member’s comments at 4:30pm on Fridays will not allow your fellow group members to engage with your ideas, so this would not earn strong participation credit. This document shares further tips on how to earn top grades for your discussion participation. Because this course is online, the discussion boards also serve as a social space in which students may express agreement, disagreement, ask for clarification, or generate new information for the group’s consideration.
Critical Reflection Assignment (CRA): Once during the semester I will deliver a prompt to students to engage in an in-depth critical reflection on an issue related to the social media topic in the course that we are currently discussing. This reflection will require you to do some brief research, share a summary of what you learned, and then share your critical opinion publicly on a group discussion board. Students’ opinion in this assignment must in some way be informed by a course concept/topic. More specific information as well as a grading rubric will be available for this assignment. Students will be in either the first round of submissions or the second round of submissions (i.e., they will only submit one CRA). The instructor will randomly assign students to a CRA submission date, which will appear for each student in Carmen. Everyone in the class will have assignment instructions and a rubric for the same amount of time prior to the submission deadline. The CRA will constitute 15% of the final course grade. If students have questions about the CRA, they should use the CRA Discussion Board available in Carmen.

Critical Reflection Response (CRR): Twice during the semester students will read and respond to another randomly assigned students' CRA submission. The CRR will be due the week after other students submit their CRAs. These responses should detail something that the student learned from the post as well as something further that they would like to know about the topic. Responses will be public and available to the original posters, so professionalism and courtesy are paramount in this assignment. More specific information as well as a grading rubric will be available for this assignment. Each of the CRRs will constitute 4% for a total of 8% of the final course grade.

Syllabus quiz: Students will take one quiz this semester that will cover the syllabus. Since we will not meet face to face at the start of the semester, this quiz will help motivate students to understand the policies and expectations in the course from the start of the semester. The other purpose of the quiz is to familiarize students with using the Carmen quiz system because this is how students will take exams in this course. Students may take this quiz as many times as they would like and the highest grade earned will be recorded. The quiz will constitute 2% of the final course grade.

GRADING

The grade for this course is based on 3 exams (lowest of 4 dropped), participation in 10 group discussions, 1 critical reflection assignment, 2 critical reflection responses, and 1 syllabus quiz.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Second Highest Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third Highest Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Group Discussions</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Reflection Assignment</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Critical Reflection Responses 8%
Syllabus Quiz 2%

I will use the standard OSU grading scale. I will not round grades and do not offer extra credit. If this course is required for you to graduate or to avoid academic probation/expulsion, I expect you to perform at your best to avoid an undesirable outcome. Be proactive in working to earn the grade you want and understanding what this requires of you.

A 93.00-100%  B 83.00-86.99%  C 73.00-76.99%  D 60.00-66.99%
A- 90.00-92.99%  B- 80.00-82.99%  C- 70.00-72.99%  E 0-59.99%
B+ 87.00-89.99%  C+ 77.00-79.99%  D+ 67.00-69.99%

OSU POLICIES

Academic misconduct. All work should be your original work. You must use citations when presenting ideas that are not your own using APA style. You must complete all submitted work by yourself. You may not reuse work from a past or current semester. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct.

Disability services. Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614-292-3307, slsds@osu.edu; slsds.osu.edu.

Sexual misconduct/relationship violence. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at http://titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu.
**Diversity.** The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

**Copyright disclaimer.** The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Students must consider copyright law before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

**Student life issues.** As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life’s Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu (Links to an external site.) or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273--TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org (Links to an external site.).

**Student academic services.** Academic Services’ website provides support for student academic success. Students can obtain information on advising issues such as tutoring, transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors at http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml (Links to an external site.). Students may learn about additional services offered on the OSU main campus by visiting http://ssc.osu.edu (Links to an external site.).

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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

The schedule below is tentative and subject to change. Refer to the weekly modules for the most up to date material list. All materials, readings, and videos are available via the modules.

**Typical weekly structure:** I release new content on Saturday at 12:00AM ET. Assessments for the week are due on Fridays by 5:00PM ET.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Lecture Video</th>
<th>Material or Reading</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Videos</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/6 – 1/10</td>
<td>What Do We Mean by Social Media?</td>
<td>1-1, 1-2</td>
<td>Syllabus; boyd &amp; Ellison (2008, excerpt); Pew Report; Humphreys (2016, excerpt); Rosen (2012)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1/11 – 1/17</td>
<td>The Ruling of Social Media</td>
<td>2-1, 2-2</td>
<td>Obar &amp; Wildman, 2015; Spar (2001); Tufekci (2016); Sonali &amp; Karr video; TikTok’s Popularity Syllabus quiz; Group Discussion 1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1/28 – 1/24</td>
<td>The Technological Basis of Social Media</td>
<td>3-1, 3-2</td>
<td>Walther and Jang (2012); Fox and McEwan (2017); Golbeck &amp; Aral (article + podcast) Group Discussion 2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1/25 – 1/31</td>
<td>The Social Basis of Social Media</td>
<td>4-1, 4-2</td>
<td>O’Sullivan &amp; Barr (2018); boyd et al. (2010) Group Discussion 3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2/1 – 2/7</td>
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<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>2/15 – 2/21</td>
<td>Organizing through Social Media I</td>
<td>7-1, 7-2</td>
<td>Tufecki (2017) Ch. 2 - 4 Group Discussion 5; CRA1 due</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2/22 – 2/28</td>
<td>Organizing through Social Media II</td>
<td>8-1, 8-2</td>
<td>Tufecki (2017) Ch. 5 - 7 Group Discussion 6; CRR1 due</td>
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<td>2/29 – 3/6</td>
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<td>Exam 2</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>3/7 – 3/13</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3/14 – 3/20</td>
<td>Virality on Social Media</td>
<td>11-1, 11-2</td>
<td>Spitzberg (2014); Berger (2013) Ch. 1; Malhotra et al. (2012, 2013); Ohanian video Group Discussion 7</td>
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<td>Videos</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>3/28 – 4/3</td>
<td>Identity and Authenticity</td>
<td>Videos 13-1, 13-2</td>
<td>Gonzales et al. (2018); Ellis video; Velez et al. (2018)</td>
<td>Group Discussion 9; CRA2 due</td>
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<td>4/4 – 4/10</td>
<td>The Dark Sides</td>
<td>Videos 14-1, 14-2</td>
<td>Bright, 2018; Fox &amp; Moreland, 2015; Fardouly &amp; Vartanian, 2016</td>
<td>Group Discussion 10; CRR2 due</td>
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