Graduate Seminar: Social Media in Public Communication

Summer Session 1 2016

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Office Hours: We can meet at *any* mutually-convenient time, f2f or online. You can chat with me through our Moodle webpage, through FaceBook (D Rehberg Sedo), via Skype (drehbergsedo), or by telephone. Please make an appointment with me. I enjoy talking with students one to one.

Collaborate Meeting Time: MONDAYS @ 11 am AST

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to provide you with an in-depth, critical overview of social media as a means of public communication. Together, we will analyse some of the cultural and communication effects of social media through critical examination of the underlying theoretical, practical and managerial foundations.

COURSE PRE-REQUISITES

Admission to the MA or MPR program and successful completion of all qualifying requirements if applicable, or permission of the instructor.

TEACHING & LEARNING PLATFORMS
Moodle and Collaborate

Familiarity with the course management software Moodle is essential. If you've never worked in this platform before, please be certain to explore the online resources provided by the MSVU distance education department.

Every Monday, excepting May 23, we will gather via Collaborate from 11:00 a.m. – noon AST for an informal discussion. You are not required to participate in these discussions, but I encourage you to do so to take advantage of guest speakers, lively discussions and opportunities to learn from one another. There are helpful 'how to' instructions on our university website if you are new to Collaborate. You will also require a microphone and speakers or a headset to participate in the Collaborate discussions. If you have any technical

problems with Collaborate or Moodle, please contact DLCE at online@msvu.ca

COURSE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

FaceBook, Instagram, Pintrest, Twitter and YouTube and a whole host of other social media platforms have become omnipresent in our working and private lives. While they might seem harmless, there are important cultural and communication implications in their use. It is my goal to expose you to some of the now historical and contemporary scholarly thought about social media. I want us to explore the various potentials and pitfalls of social media through critical analysis. And, in doing this, I also want you to experience the positive, negative (and the in between) of social media application.

At the end of this class, you should be able to

1. Critically analyse the evolution of social media as both a cultural and a communication phenomenon.
2. Discuss relevant theoretical foundations for the analysis and application of social media projects and programs.
3. Articulate the impact social media adoption has had on professional practice models in public relations.
4. Identify areas for scholarly study to further understand the communication and cultural implications of social media.
5. Evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of a variety of social media tools in terms of potential communication and relationship outcomes.
6. Analyse and discuss social media policy in organizations.
7. Analyse the impact that social media can have on the development and nurturing of long-term relationships between organizations and their important publics.
8. Discuss the ethical and legal implications of social media on a personal, organizational and societal level.
9. Critically examine current cases of social media programs and projects.
10. Apply your new knowledge and skills creatively for yourself or a client of your choice.

COURSE MATERIAL

This course requires you to complete extensive reading, viewing, contemplation and writing. You should schedule at least 15 hours of your week to dedicate to this course.

In addition to the course texts, various readings and supplementary digital material (including videos and podcasts) will be required, and will be available through our Moodle web page. Some readings may not be available on the Moodle page. You will need to find them yourself through our MSVU Library web page. The required material is indicated in each of the module outlines, which are listed on our Moodle page beginning May 9.

The Required Books for this course are

Dijck, Jose van. *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford University Press, 2013 (Available in electronic format from MSVU Library; please note that you each student will be required to read only four of eight chapters. Details will be provided in Module 1), and

Meikle, Graham. *Social Media: Communication, Sharing and Visibility*. 1 edition. New York: Routledge, 2016. (Reserve print copy available in the MSVU Library)

COURSE FORMAT
The course is divided into four modules:

Critical Perspectives **Module one** May 9-22	• Cultural and social implications • Communication implications • State of scholarly inquiry
Practical Perspectives **Module Two** May 23-June 6	• Identification of major tools • Practical applications • Message dissemination and/or relationship building • Analytics
Managerial Perspectives **Module Three** June 7-13	• Strategic considerations • Organisational policy development • Ethical and legal implications
Case Studies **Module Four** June 14-24	• Classic/historical: Egyptian Uprising or Walmat • Contemporary: Donglegate; or Qantas Arilines: Twitter Nosedive (Ivey); or, Google Skybox (Ivey) • Another case of your choice (current)

EVALUATION PLAN

Assignments and Evaluation (Negotiable until May 13)

These assignments are designed to measure your achievement in three domains: knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Peer Engagement: Moodle fora discussions
(30%)

Due: Throughout the term

- You are expected to think analytically, creatively, and critically about the module's topic, and the listening, reading, viewing material in the context of your daily lives.
- You will be evaluated on your participation in the forums that I've created for each module; use them to help each other. This may be the most important element in the course. Be prepared to share quotes/questions/issues from the material. Identify and take note of *at least* one quote and one question, and highlight one issue from the material in responding to a comment or question I pose, or that your peers pose. These musings should encourage discussion. (If you've learned to keep a learning log in other courses, this will serve you well. If you've not kept a learning log, I suggest you do so now because it's a useful tool.) Please also feel free to create your own discussion topic. Your posts should be:
    1. written clearly
    2. factually correct; cite assigned readings
    3. illustrative of sound critical thinking and analysis
    4. respectful
    5. comments that contribute to the thread of, and encourage further, discussion

    (based on Knowlton, 2003)

    Note that in Module Four, in particular, we evaluate cases in Moodle. **I will be evaluating your case study participation separately from your general class participation.** See below for more details.

- We will have a FaceBook page for our class
  (Graduate Seminar for Social Media in Public Communication). It is currently a public page, but we'll make it private and secret by May 13. (Participation is optional.)
- We also have a course Twitter feed. Please feel free to use this to discuss anything that you think is relevant to the course. You can follow each other #gprl6202. Use the same hashtag if you post on Instagram. (Participation is optional.)

Research paper
(20%) **Due May 30 (no later than 11:55 pm)**
(No late assignments accepted w/o prior approval)

This is a not-more-than 2000-word essay that will: 1) give you an opportunity to explore the scholarly literature covering social media; and, 2) give me an opportunity to evaluate your ability to analyse and synthesise academic research material, to create a strong argument and to write in a scholarly style.

As you work through the reading and material for Module 1, choose a topic for your paper. The following questions might help you frame your topic, and are meant to help you begin to theoretically connect social media with public relations as a practice and as an academic discipline.

- To what extent has social media changed the professional communication landscape?
- Have professional communicators adopted social media as just another "tactic"? Are Social Media analytics more important than the conversation itself? If so, in what ways?
- What are the ethical considerations of using social media in planned communication programs?
- How can professional communicators balance "new media" with traditional approaches to communication and relationship building?
- How can communication scholars help professional communicators better understand social media?

Let your answer to one of these questions serve as your thesis statement. Include at least 10 scholarly sources in your paper, and not more than five non-academic sources. Use APA-style referencing to explore your ideas. You may want to browse a journal called New Media & Society or consult with me for other ideas if the questions posed above do not help you.

Submit your essay via Moodle with the following file name: Research Paper. Your Last Name. Your first name. Submit only Word documents. E.g. Research Paper.Rehberg Sedo.D.

Please Note: if students are interested, I will arrange for a Collaborate session with one of our fabulous librarians. Please, let me know. In the meantime, check out
http://forms.msvu.ca/library/tutorial/pr/pr.htm There are also other tutorials created by other university libraries that are available for use.

GRADUATE GRADING FRAMEWORK FOR YOUR RESEARCH PAPER

GRADE A:	OUTSTANDING		VERY GOOD
	A+	A	A-
	90-100	85-89	80-84
Presentation of ideas	Fluidly expressed original thought showing a high degree of conceptual integration and synthesis accompanied by critical evaluation of the theoretical context in which the material is presented.		
Foundation	Mastery of a wide range of relevant literature and support materials.		
Argument	Sophisticated and articulate development of coherently structured ideas.		

Form

Excellent adaptation to the genre. Flexibility in sentence structure and paragraph development in a manner appropriate to the theme. Citation style is perfect.

GRADE B:	GOOD		ACCEPTABLE
	B+	B	B-
	77-79	73-76	70-72

Presentation of ideas

Competently expressed ideas, showing a substantial knowledge of the information and theoretical concepts associated with the subject, accompanied by analysis, some synthesis, and some application.

Foundation

Mastery of a substantial body of relevant literature and support materials.

Argument

Clearly organised, well-introduced, well-structured ideas.

Form

Presented in an appropriate format. Basic competence in sentence structure, paragraph development, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling. Citation style is between good and acceptable.

GRADE C: MINIMALLY ACCEPTABLE
                       C
                       69-60

Presentation of ideas

Logically organised ideas demonstrating an acceptable grasp of the material, some analysis, and basic comprehension of application.

Foundation

Mastery of an adequate body of relevant literature and support materials.

Argument

Adequately organised and coherent argument.

Form

Presentation shows an awareness of the format required. Readable writing, showing an effort to follow instructions. Citation style needs work.

GRADE F: FAILURE
                       F
                       50-59

Presentation of ideas   Indication of knowledge of basic concepts, little application, analysis, or integration.

Foundation   Evidence of the bare minimum of relevant literature.

Argument   Basically comprehensible.

Form   Sentence structure, vocabulary, and usage minimally acceptable.

Case Study   **Due: Original reaction post June 20; Commentary posts June 24**
(20%)
1. Choose one of the five case studies listed above. (Note that the Qantas and Google Skybox cases are available via IveyCaseStudies.com for $3.95.) Write a not-more-than 250-word response to the questions about the case in the appropriate Moodle forum.

Grading Criteria
- Post is substantive (thoroughly developed)
- Post is well written (organization, grammar, and spelling)
- Post demonstrates your understanding of the topic/issue
- Post illustrates critical reflection of course readings and discussions

2. Read *at least one* other post made by a peer analyzing the same study, and *at least one* from a peer who chose a different case. Comment on the cases. Failure to make an informed comment will result in losing five points from your own case study analysis.

==*Your final evaluation in this course is *either* a team project or an individual research paper.*==

Team Project
(30% team mark)

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Due June 22 (no later than 11:55 pm)
(No late assignments accepted)

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Working in teams of two or three, you will choose a client for whom you will work. You will prepare a creative communication plan that utilizes social media for your client. The plan will bring together all that you have learned during the course, and will be presented as a pre-recorded pitch. You will provide one hard copy to your client, and submit one electronic version to me via Moodle.

The clients:	☝Your choice (it can be your place of work, but it must be a new plan).
The challenge:	To utilize at least two social media tools as part of a strategic approach to relationship building and maintenance.
The submission:	Each team will submit a complete written plan consisting of the following elements: ❖Background, including a summary of the client, its current communication practices, and the quality of its relevant relationships. ❖ The strategy, including one overall strategic goal.

❖ Detailed rationale, including reasons for choosing the specific tools to achieve the goal.

❖ Measurable objectives for what the tools will accomplish.

❖ A description of the tools and a presentation of the actual tools as developed by the team.

❖ A detailed description of the recommended evaluation process.

❖ A discussion of the future applications or extensions of the tools.

The plan must be client-ready.

Peer reviews:	Each student must submit individual evaluations of each team member. This is your opportunity to evaluate the contributions of your peers to your team. Give each member of your team (excluding yourself) a rating out of ten. Remember that a 9 or 10 means that the member has given 90% to 100% contribution; a 5 means 50% or "passable"; less than 5 means that the person failed to participate adequately. You should decide on a mark according to the following criteria:

- Attendance in group meetings
- Effort made to participate
- Willingness to consider others' ideas
- Preparedness
- *The quality* of the contribution
- *ANYTHING* **else that is important to you, and that was set out in your group contract (I suggest doing this right away after your team is formed.)**

Please note that this evaluation may influence your individual mark.

The presentation:	Each team will pitch the plan to all of us. This can be done in a variety of

creative ways (e.g. wiki, SlideShare, podcast, video, Twitter stream). A forum for posting links to your project will be provided. The presentation is due June 22 before 11:55 pm, as is the written plan.

(Adapted from a similar project designed by Patty Parsons.)

Your project & pitch will be evaluated as follows:

ATTRIBUTE	EMERGING	COMPETENT	EXEMPLARY
RESEARCH & INNOVATION	Little research applied to build plan; limited knowledge shown; traditional approach applied.	Issue explored with curiosity; adequate knowledge from variety of sources displayed; strategies reflect innovation and creativity.	Knowledge base displays scope, thoroughness, and quality. Research applied in the identification of key stakeholders, communication objective development and strategic advice; innovation and creative thinking evident in plan.
ANALYSIS & CRITICAL THINKING	Limited analysis; tool(s) not appropriate; weak rationale; no evaluation strategy.	Identifies potential issues; uses an issues management approach; tool(s) appropriate; wise rationale; suitable evaluation strategy.	Uses critical thinking to pose and respond to questions; constructs plan that considers a multitude of perspectives; identifies potential issues and mitigation strategies; excellent rationale for specific tool(s); tool(s) ready for implementation; thorough and appropriate evaluation strategy.
COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY	Ideas are not well-articulated; lack of strategic direction provided.	Strategic direction clear; communication objectives clear but may be challenging to measure; suitable visuals; engaging.	Strategic direction and advice is clear and based upon best practices; communication objectives are clear, concise and measurable; exemplary use of visuals; commendable.
	C+ C C-	B+ B B-	A+ A A-

(Adapted from: http://www4.nau.edu/assessment/main/degree/plans/PubRel_BS_04_06.pdf)

If you do not want to work on a plan, you will be required to write a final paper instead.

**Final Paper
(30%)**

**Due June 22 (no later than 11:55 pm)
(No late assignments accepted)**

The purpose of the paper is to give you further opportunity to investigate your earlier research topic in greater depth. It should reflect your interest and intended research or applied project. In 6,000-8,000 words, APA style, write a paper that you could send to a scholarly journal (identify the journal in a foot note). Include at least 20 scholarly sources in your paper, and not more than ten non-academic sources.

Submit your essay via Moodle with the following file name: FINAL Research Paper. Your Last Name. Your first name. Submit only Word documents. E.g.FINAL Research Paper.Rehberg Sedo.DeNel.

I will use the previously noted rubric for papers to evaluate your work.

COURSE POLICIES (NEGOTIABLE UNTIL MAY 13)

Academic Integrity. (NON-Negotiable). I expect you to be honest and responsible in fulfilling the course requirements and objectives. DISCIPLINARY ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IF YOU cheat. You will fail the assignment, and you may fail the course. You cannot fail a course in the graduate program. Note that plagiarism is presenting someone else's words or ideas obtained from any source, including the Internet, as though they were one's own. Other, specific offences include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Using copied material without enclosing that material in quotation marks and/or without appropriately acknowledging its source;
- Paraphrasing or summarizing the original wording too closely;
- Omitting acknowledgment of the source of paraphrases and summaries;
- Submitting work that has been written in full or in part by someone else;
- Submitting work you have submitted for credit in another course without acknowledging its source to me prior to submitting the assignment.

As required by the University, I am including the following for your information:

University regulations on Plagiarism and Cheating will be strictly enforced. These regulations are posted on boards and are found in the University Calendar and on the website at www.msvu.ca on the "Current Student" page under "Academic Offences".

Communication technologies. While I encourage you to share your passion and interests in new gadgets and software, I ask that while we are participating in our Collaborate sessions that you give full, deserved attention to me and to your peers. Turn off all devices and please stay focused on the learning software. You deserve it, your peers deserve it, and I deserve it.

Course Syllabus. The syllabus is a guide for our class structure. While it is a collaborative document drafted by me and negotiated by you, it is our course "memorandum of understanding" after May 13.

Grading/marking. Graded assignments should be discussed one on one between you and me. Please make an appointment. Grading concerns should be addressed within one week after the assignment is returned.

Personal Issues. If you are experiencing *any* kind of personal issue that prohibits you from completing tasks by the due date, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to create a mutually-desirable compromise. I will be able to do little to help you if you wait until the due date or the final weeks of the term.

Special Accommodations. If you are a student who needs special accommodation, please notify me as soon as possible. I cannot provide special accommodation retrospectively. Students who have a disability and who require academic accommodations must register with Disability Services as early as possible in order to receive accommodations." (http://www.msvu.ca/disabilityservices)

Session Cancellations. If power is cut, or something else strange happens, I will notify you of my absence via our Twitter feed and our Moodle page.

Religious Observances. Requests for accommodation of specific religious or spiritual observance must be presented in writing to me within the first week of class.

Although not expected, I am including the following:

Research Obligations**.** Students who conduct research involving human participants must have their research reviewed in accordance with the MSVU Policies and Procedures for Ethics Review of Research before starting the research. Check with me about proper procedure.