Course title: Social Media's Revolutionary Impact on Journalism and Society
Course code: JOUR 3004 PRAG
Programs offering course: Central European Studies, Communication, New Media, and Journalism
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Fall 2020

Course Description

This course examines the tremendous impact of social media on many walks of life, with a special emphasis on how social media have been transforming the profession of journalist and how the public now consumes news and information. It also offers a look beyond the field of journalism to consider how social media and online communities are profoundly affecting the ways in which young people form their identities and then how those identities develop later in life. Special sessions tackle the influence of social media on the construction of identity, and on the relationship and community building. Many of these issues are discussed in the context of Central and Eastern Europe and the "Western" experience of social media is compared to the situation in the post-communist world. The course addresses many questions related to social media, including the definition of "social media", the role of social media in the formation of community, the role of social media as a uniting or dividing factor, the differences in the consumption of social media in Central and Eastern Europe, the role of social media technologies in constructions of youth, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality, the effect of social media improving on the state of journalism, changes in the role of the journalist with the advance of social media, and others.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Analyze and assess the transformation of the journalist profession as a result of social media and online communities;
- Compare social media consumption in the “West” and East Central Europe;
- Improve their writing and social media skills through writing tasks, discussions and other assignments;
- Acquire a critical insight into social media, which will shift their perspective from mere social media users/consumers into practitioners familiar with this phenomenon in a much broader and theoretical sense.

Course Prerequisites

No prerequisites, just a healthy curiosity in how social media is rapidly transforming the world around us and interest in journalism.

Methods of Instruction

Students will receive information through lectures, readings, discussions, and from writing assignments. The class will be informal and interactive, with a heavy emphasis on class participation and presentations.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Midterm Presentation 20%
2. Class Blog Posts 20%
3. Final Research Presentation 10%
4. Final Research Paper 25%
5. Class Participation 25%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Midterm Presentation
Each student group will present on a topic related to one of the class sessions in the first half of the class. Presentations will last a maximum of 15 minutes, and each member of the group should participate.

Class Blog Posts

These posts will require you to make connections between course readings/theories and your own observations/experiences of social media. You are also encouraged to post responses to other students’ blog posts. You will be required to post a total of two blog posts, each between 500-700 words. Each student will be required to post according to the deadlines below, with a penalty of one grade for each week of lateness.

Final Research Presentation

You will create a multimedia presentation of your research, which you will share with the class as well as post online. You may choose to make a video, an audio podcast, and/or a slide presentation. The presentation should 1) explain the topic you researched, 2) describe the methods you used to conduct your research, 3) summarize your findings, and 4) point to directions for further research on the topic.

Final Research Paper

You will conduct research on a specific topic of your choosing related to social media, with at least part of your paper analyzing the situation in Central and Eastern Europe. Your research may either be a review of literature or an empirical study (we will discuss this more in class). You will write up your study in a paper ranging from 2,000-2,500 words that will be due the week before the final exam period.

Class Participation

You are expected to do the required reading before class and to be an active participant during the class debates/presentations indicated below. If students do not keep up with the reading, the instructor may initiate reading quizzes at the beginning of selected classes. As part of the participation grade, each student will be asked to present two readings from the assigned list according to her/his choice over the course of the semester, with one presentation before the midterm. You should present a summary of the reading not lasting more than five minutes, and then your own interpretation of the main findings of the reading and their relevance to the main topic of that particular session. Each presentation will be worth 10% of the final participation grade. Please note, however, that all students, not just the discussion facilitators, are expected to read and discuss the assigned reading each week.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

CIEE Prague Class Participation Policy

Assessment of students’ participation in class is an inherent component of the course grade. Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Students are required to actively, meaningfully and thoughtfully contribute to class discussions and all types of in-class activities throughout the duration of the class.

Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed, in advance of each class session. This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Students are responsible for following the course content and are expected to ask clarification questions if they cannot follow the instructor's or other students’ line of thought or argumentation.

The use of electronic devices is only allowed for computer-based in-class tests, assignments and other tasks specifically assigned by the course instructor. Students are expected to take notes by hand unless the student is entitled to the use of computer due to his/her academic accommodations. In such cases the student is required to submit an official letter issued by his/her home institution specifying the extent of academic accommodations.

Class participation also includes students’ active participation in Canvas discussions and other additional tasks related to the course content as specified by the instructor.

Students will receive a partial participation grade every three weeks.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program.
If you will miss a class for any reason, notify the Program Coordinator and your instructor beforehand via Canvas. You are responsible for any materials covered in class during your absence, and except in the specific cases listed below, credit will not be granted for missed assessments.

Excessive absences will result in a notification letter, and finally a warning letter, sent to you and your home school, based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of course hours missed</th>
<th>Number of CEE classes</th>
<th>Minimum penalty</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>One to Three 90-min. classes; or One 180-min. class</td>
<td>No penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% - 20%</td>
<td>Four 90-min. classes</td>
<td>Written notification* to the student, followed by a warning letter to the student and home school; 3% reduction in the final grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five 90-min. classes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two 180-min classes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>Six 90-min. classes; or Three 180-min. classes</td>
<td>Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion with notification to the home school</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* The notification letters are intended to ensure that you are well advised in advance of any potential for failure or dismissal, so that you can take steps to avoid this.

As the table shows, **missing more than 20% of any class (e.g., due to undocumented illness, travel delays, flight cancellations, over-sleeping, etc.) results in automatic failure of the course.**

If you miss an assessment in class due to an absence, you will be able to make it up in the following instances:

- You provide a relevant doctor’s note from a local medical professional to your Program Coordinator within 24 hours of your absence (a scan or photograph sent via e-mail are acceptable)
- A CIEE staff member verifies that you were too ill to attend class.
- You provide evidence of a family emergency to your Program Coordinator.
- You have an approved absence related to the observance of a religious holiday from the Academic Director based on a request submitted before you arrived onsite.

**Please note:** Absences incurred due to documented illness, documented family emergency or the observance of a religious holiday approved before arrival onsite do not count towards the total of absences. Students may self-certify one absence due to illness without providing a doctor’s note as long as they notify the Program Coordinator within 24 hours of their absence by e-mail or a text message.

**Other attendance-related policies**

If you transfer from one CIEE class to another during the Add/Drop period, you will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of the new class provided you were marked present for the first session(s) of the original class.

If you are over 15 minutes late for a class, the instructor is required to mark you absent.

In case of class conflicts (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips and make-up classes), always contact the Academic Department to decide the appropriate course of action.

Please remember to track your attendance on the Canvas Course Sites and report any errors in the record to the Academic Department within one week of the discrepancy date, as later claims may not be considered.

These attendance rules also apply to any required co-curricular excursion, activity, or event, and to for-credit internships.

CIEE staff does not manage absences at partner institutions providing direct enrollment classes (FAMU, ECES and FSV), but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.

*N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.*

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

Class: 1.1 Class Introduction
Class: 1.2 Studying and Defining Social Media and Online Communities

Reading:

Baym, 2010, selections.
Sandvig, The Oversharer (and Other Social Media Experiments), 2011.

Assignment: First blog post due

Week 2
Class: 2.1 Online Communities and Social Capital

Reading:

Everyone should read, in its entirety: Gardner & Davis by Week 3: Gardner & Davis, 2013.
Stevens, Chattopadhyay & Rill, 2008.

Class: 2.2 Introduction to WordPress

How to use WordPress, the class blogging platform. This lecture will introduce you to WordPress (if you don't know it already), and show you how to post to the class blog.

Week 3
Class: 3.1 Youth Development

Be sure to have read by this date: Gardner & Davis, 2013.

Class: 3.2 Class Debate

Were social media a positive or negative influence on your pre-teen and teen years?
Twenge, “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation”
Cavanagh, “No, Smartphones are Not Destroying a Generation.”
Samuel, “Yes, Smartphones are Destroying a Generation, But Not of Kids.”

First blog post due

Week 4
Class: 4.1 Gender/Sexuality

Gudelunas, 2012

Week 5
Class: 5.1 Dating/Online Relationships

Shafrir, 2015.
Finkel, 2015.
Feuer, 2015.

Class: 5.2 Race

Manjoo, 2010.
Week 6
Class: 6.1 Midterm Presentations

Midterm Exam Period

Class: 6.2 Midterm Presentations

Week 7
Class: 7.1 Individual Discussions about paper topics and movie:

Individual Discussions about paper topics and movie:

The Internet's Own Boy: The Story of Aaron Swartz

Filmmaker Brian Knappenberger explores the life and work of programming prodigy and information activist Aaron Swartz.

Class: 7.2 The Debate Over the Power of Social Media for Change

Shirky, 2011.
Tufekci, 2010.
Madrigal, 2011.

Week 8
Class: 8.1 Social Media Activism case studies

Assignment: Come to class with your own examples

Class: 8.2 Field Trip to Bloomberg

Second blog post due!

Week 9
Class: 9.1 Trolling, Social Media and Terrorism

Morozov, 2011.
Mooney, 2014.
Manjoo, 2017.

Please read this overview and the excerpt summaries that follows Journalist’s Resource:
http://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/social-media/social-media-violent-extremism-isis-online-speech-research-review

Class: 9.2 Guest lecture: Jaroslav Valuch, Online Hate Speech

Jaroslav is Czech expert in social media activism and communication with crisis-affected populations. He has worked with dozens of initiatives from all over the world. Recently he led a Czech governmental campaign against hate crimes and hate speech.

Week 10
Class: 10.1 Fake News, Propaganda, and Disinformation

Pomerantsev, 2014.
Silverman and Alexander, 2016.
Smoleňová, 2015: 3-4 & 11-12.

Class: 10.2 Social media’s impact on Journalism.
   Verification, problems, techniques, examples.
   Nieman Reports, 2012: 1-31,

Week 11
Class: 11.1 Excursion to Respekt (the best Czech weekly newsmagazine)
Class: 11.2 Social Media Marketing
   Clemons, 2009.

Week 12
Class: 12.1 Guest Speaker: Zuzana Zahorova: Online Marketing Specialist
   Social media marketing in the Czech Republic
Class: 12.2 Final paper presentations

Week 13
Class: 13.1 Final paper presentations (all papers due)
Class: 13.2 Wrap Up

Course Materials

Readings


Freelon, Deen, Charlton D. McIlwain and Meredith D. Clark. “Beyond the Hashtags.” 2016


