



COMM 4352
Special Topics: Internet and Social Media for Public Relations

St. Edward's University • Department of Communication

Section 03 • Fall 2008 • TH 108 • TR 11:00 – 12:15 p.m.
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Office Hours: TR: 5:00-6:00 p.m., W: 12:00-2:00 p.m. and by appointment

Required Textbooks:

McConnell, B. & Huba, J. (2006). *Citizen Marketers: When People Are the Message*. Kaplan Business.
Gillin, P. (2007). *The New Influencers: A Marketer's Guide to the New Social Media*. Quill Driver Books.

* As part of your readings for class, you will also be required to listen to a number of podcasts. These podcasts consist of interviews with PR and marketing professionals, technology specialists, and South by Southwest panel discussions. All podcasts can be accessed through Blackboard.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In April 2006, Richard Edelman, CEO of the largest independently owned PR firm in the world, told an audience of PR professionals that:

“The media, communications, and marketing landscape in which the public relations industry was developed is being knocked down [...] It is the decline of media based on a top-down model of communications. In this model, a small group of elites are briefed in advance with messages that are too often tightly scripted to brief the national newspaper, broadcast networks and newsmagazines. The message is then simplified and communicated to a mass audience via advertising or as “earned” editorial. This model is premised on the audience being passive receptors for the message [...] In the emerging model, as epitomized by YouTube, MySpace, Oh My News and Wikipedia, ordinary people provide content to others. Ideas and information are passed virally. This consumer generated content alters the laws of control of message. Many are calling this new social and user driven media ‘Web 2.0.’”

In this course, we will explore emerging social media technologies and study their application in contemporary PR practice. We will not only examine these technologies from a theoretical perspective by reading scholarly research and writings from PR professionals, but we will also learn how to use and author content for such online PR tools ourselves. Topics we will cover include: social media and Web 2.0, blogs, wikis, podcasts, RSS feeds, viral video, social bookmarking, social media news releases, and other emerging web technologies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a result of taking this class, you will:

- ❖ Understand how the PR industry is incorporating new media and social media technologies into contemporary PR practice
- ❖ Understand the need to stay abreast of advances in communication technology in order to succeed as a PR professional
- ❖ Learn how to locate the information and the technical know-how to help you stay abreast of those advances
- ❖ Learn to create and adapt video, audio, and text for online PR tools
- ❖ Be able to produce webpages, blogs, and podcasts for communications campaigns
- ❖ Be able to critically discuss the effects of the use of computer-mediated communication within the corporate and nonprofit environments served by the PR industry

PORTFOLIO OBJECTIVES

This class fulfills the following communication portfolio objectives:

- ❖ **Leadership** – Course content mastery will require students to take the initiative in their own learning and spent time outside regular scheduled class hours to familiarize themselves with new social media technologies.
- ❖ **Written communication** – This will be a writing-intensive class. Students will practice both collaborative and individual writing. Each student will host a PR blog, comment on other students' blogs, and join classmates in creating and editing pages for a class wiki.
- ❖ **Use of technology** – This course will familiarize students with the newest social media technologies and teach them how to author and publish social media content themselves. More importantly, it will show them how to locate the information and technical know-how to stay abreast of the ever-changing media landscape.
- ❖ **Group communication** – To stay true to the spirit of social media, students will collaborate in the creation and evaluation of a body of knowledge on social media. Students will be expected to contribute original ideas and to enter into a critical conversation about those ideas with other students.
- ❖ **Theoretical perspective** – In their blog and wiki contributions, students will examine a variety of theoretical perspectives on social media technologies and will be evaluated based on their ability to apply these theories to real world PR examples.
- ❖ **Professionalism** – The blogging project will require students to develop their constructive criticism skills and to respond to peer criticism in a productive manner.

COURSE POLICIES

1. Attendance

Number of absences. Attendance at each class is required. Each time you are absent from class counts as one absence. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be marked absent for that day. After your second absence, your final grade will be reduced by three percentage points for each additional absence.

Excused absences. If you have a valid and unavoidable reason for missing class, you may submit a completed *Excused Absence Request* along with a two page (at least 500 words) chapter summary / discussion for the material you missed. Your excused absence request and chapter summary must be

turned in within a week after your return to class. The request form is available on Blackboard under Course Documents. A separate request form and additional chapter summary / discussion must be submitted for each absence. You will also need to provide me with proper documentation for your absence (such as a doctor's note, a hospitalization record, a university excuse, or an athletic excuse). All documentation must be turned in by the last day of class for the excuses to be considered. After review of your request I will determine whether the excuse will be granted.

If you are involved in athletics or another school-sanctioned activity that requires you to miss this class, please give me appropriate supporting material signed by the sponsor. Please underline or highlight the specific dates that involve this class. If changes occur throughout the semester after you have given me a schedule, please keep me updated.

Attendance sheet. After the first week of class, it is your responsibility to sign the roll sheet each class period. Be sure to do so, as this is the official record of your attendance in class.

Withdrawal for absences. I reserve the right to "WA" any student with more than 6 absences. Please note that this does not mean that I will automatically "WA" you if you risk to fail the class. It is your responsibility to initiate drop procedures if you are in danger of failing this class.

2. Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty includes cheating on exams as well as plagiarizing (presenting another's work as your own). Cheating comes in all different shades—ranging from blatant copying off another's exam/bringing a 'cheat sheet' to class to more subtle forms of 'borrowing' a few ideas and not citing your sources—all of which will be treated with the same level of seriousness in this class. The St. Edward's University Undergraduate Bulletin and the Student Handbook state that a student who is dishonest in any work may receive the maximum penalty of a mark of F for that course. Withdrawal from a course is not allowed when an F in the course for academic dishonesty has been imposed. Students caught committing academic dishonesty in this course will be subject to the full range of penalties as described in the Undergraduate Bulletin and in the Student Handbook.

* A note on my expectations for your writing: I want to see you express your own thoughts in your own words in this class. I therefore expect each blog post or wiki entry to be your own writing, and not a collection of cut and pasted pieces from other people's writings. You know the rules: if you need to cite someone, use quotation marks and credit the source.

3. Courtesy Rules regarding Cell Phone and Computer Use

As a courtesy to your instructor and to your classmates, please make sure at the beginning of each class period that your cell phones and pagers are turned off. You are welcome to use your laptop to take notes during class. However, should you use a computer for purposes not related to our class (emailing, working on a paper, completing a homework assignment, etc.), you will be counted as absent for that day.

If your class meets in a computer lab, do not login to the computers once class has started unless otherwise instructed. On days that we will not be using the computers the login screen needs to be visible on your computer screens. Should you be logged into the computer once class has started, you will be counted as absent for that day.

4. Assignments

All assignments must be word-processed and turned in on time. Our blog server will automatically log the time you submitted your posts and comments. I will use the server time stamp to determine whether or not an assignment was submitted on time. Late work will result in a 10% grade reduction for each day (not class period) it is late.

Please note that I will **NOT** accept any emailed assignments. If you are absent from class on a day an assignment is due, you are still expected to submit your assignment that day by uploading it to the blog server.

5. Email Policy

I check email once per day, usually in the afternoon, and I will get back with you as soon as possible. Please note that I do not return email over the weekend.

6. Grades

If you are not doing as well as you had anticipated, please don't hesitate to come talk to me so that we can discuss how you might improve your performance on the remaining assignments.

<u>Grading Scale</u>			<u>Course Grade</u>	
A+ = 100	A = 95	A- = 92	A	90-100
B+ = 88	B = 85	B- = 82	B	80-89
C+ = 78	C = 75	C- = 72	C	70-79
D+ = 68	D = 65	D- = 62	D	60-69
F = 50			F	Below 60

7. Special Accommodations

If you have a medical, psychiatric or learning disability and require accommodations in this class, please let me know early in the semester or as soon as you are eligible. You will first need to provide documentation of your disability to the Student Disability Services Office located in Moody Hall 155 in Academic Planning and Support Services. Please note that special accommodations cannot be made retroactively.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Blog Posts	200 (20%)
Blog Comments	150 (15%)
Podcast Project	100 (10%)
Webvideo Project	150 (15%)
Social Bookmark Contributions	100 (10%)
Midterm Exam	150 (15%)
Final Exam	150 (15%)

BLOGGING PROJECT: BLOG POSTS

In order to get a feel for the social media technologies we will be discussing in this class, you will need to learn how to use all of them first. Since we will be talking a lot about blogs, you will be required to launch your own PR blog and to post to it throughout the semester. At the end of the course, your blog will document your progress and growth throughout the semester.

Blog Posts (20%)

Your blog posts will be worth 20% of your final grade (10% for work done by midterm, and 10% for work done by the last week of classes). You are required to make two blog posts a week:

- One of those posts will be a reaction to the week's reading and/or class material.
- The other one will be an original post in which you discuss interesting usages of social media that you stumbled across, or examine new social media technologies. You can also share your thoughts on how the PR industry is using/should use social media, or on how communication theories can be applied to social media PR practice. As you can tell, pretty much any topic is fair game for the second post as long as it pertains to the class. The idea is to get you to engage the course material critically and to have you keep your eyes open for interesting material to blog about. I want you to become an active learner and to start being on the lookout for material to incorporate into the class instead of relying on me, as the instructor, to tell you what is important.

It doesn't matter what day of the week you blog, as long as you add two posts a week, and as long as one is a reaction to the readings and one an original post. Any source used to inform your blog post needs to be cited and linked to. All posts also need to be tagged appropriately.

Please note that you will not receive credit for:

- Posts that don't relate to social media or PR
- Posts that simply announce a new service/technology without examining it
- Posts that were added late (you need to blog on a regular, weekly basis)
- Posts that contain inappropriate language. Remember, your blog reflects your personal brand and is indexed by search engines. You don't want to create a negative online identity. Please refer to our discussion of blogging etiquette or talk to me if you have further questions about this.

Grading Criteria:

1. Post is substantive (thoroughly developed)
2. Post is well written (organization, grammar, spelling)
3. Post demonstrates your understanding of the topic/issue
4. Created required amount of posts

BLOGGING PROJECT: BLOG COMMENTS

In the blogosphere, commenting is a way to initiate a conversation around a topic. You are required to leave two comments a week and to keep a log of where you commented. I expect you to leave substantive comments that either extend other bloggers' arguments, contradict them, or provide some new insight into the topic. Your blog comments will be worth 15% of your final grade.

You can comment on:

- Your classmates' blogs
- The blogs of social media students from classes around the world we will be collaborating with this semester (list to be published on BB and the course blog)
- The blogs of PR and marketing professionals

Two notes on blog comments:

- I expect substance here. No two-word type comments à la "great post", "good job", "I totally agree with you", etc. If you agree/disagree, explain yourself. The goal is to add value to the original post and to deepen the conversation.
- I also expect civility. No intentional provocations/expletives/obscenities, etc. If you disagree with a post, do so politely. Again, the idea is to start a civil, but also critical conversation. We don't all have to agree with one another, but I do expect you to respect one another.

Comment log:

Please note that it is absolutely essential for you to keep track of where you leave comments and to collect those comments in a log, which you will hand in at the end of the semester. For each comment you leave, your log should contain the:

- name of the blog you commented on
- the URL of the blog post you commented on
- the date of your comment
- the actual comment

Grading Criteria:

1. Comments are substantive (add value to the post)
2. Comments invite a conversation/reflection
3. Created required amount of comments

PODCAST PROJECT

For this project you will work in a team of 3. Your assignment is to produce a 5-10 minute podcast on an issue pertaining to this class. You can either interview an expert on the topic of social media and make that interview available in form of a podcast, or discuss a social media & PR issue in your group and edit that discussion into a podcast.

The goal of this project is two-fold: (1) to produce a meaningful audio resource on the topic of social media, and (2) to demonstrate that you possess the necessary skills to produce a podcast. You will be evaluated both on the content and the technical quality of the podcast.

The specific topic of your interview or your group discussion will depend on the area of expertise of your interviewee and/or your own area of interest. This is your time to be creative! If you decide to interview an outside source, be sure to develop your interview questions ahead of your interview and to phrase your questions in such a way as to avoid simple yes/no type answers.

Requirements:

- Create a 5-10 minute podcast and burn an RSS feed
- Create a blog post about your podcast which links to the podcast, contains the show notes, and is tagged for effective search engine exposure

Grading Criteria:

Interview Content

1. Questions invite in-depth exploration of social media issues
2. Chosen expert has credibility in topic area

(or) Group Discussion Content

1. Discussion explored social media issue in-depth
2. Members came across as credible by citing/discussing relevant research

Technical Quality

3. Podcast is well edited (use of bumpers & jingles, clean cuts)
4. Audio quality is good (adjusted volume, quality recording)

Overall Requirements

5. Fulfills the 2 requirements listed above

WEB VIDEO

Social media technologies have not only made it easier to upload user-generated content to the web, but they have also given us new ways of expressing our opinions and sharing them with others. While the blogging project is requiring you to express yourself through writing, the web video project will allow you to make your points visually.

Since knowledge of video editing wasn't a pre-requisite for this class and proper video-editing instruction could easily take up a whole semester, we will only be able to cover the basics in the few class periods we have set aside for this project.

For this project, you will pick a social issue of importance to you and produce a 30 or 60 second web video that strives to raise awareness about that issue. This is your chance to be creative and to make a video that will grab the attention of the on-line community. The goal is to make a top rated viral video that creates a real buzz and gets people thinking about the social issue you picked.

Your job will be to develop a creative idea, obtain footage (pics and/or video), edit the video, add sound and text, format it for web distribution, and post it to your blog. There are a number of resources for locating free stock photos and images on the course blog.

Requirements:

- Create a 30 or 60 second video which raises awareness of a social issue
- Create a blog post about your video which embeds the video, describes your creative idea, and is tagged for effective search engine exposure

Grading Criteria:

1. Video is well edited (smooth & appropriate transitions, synchronized audio track & text)
2. Video quality is good (not too grainy)
3. Audio quality is good (edited correctly, proper volume)
4. Video is uploaded to Youtube and embedded on the blog with proper tags
5. Video is creative and draws attention to the issue

SOCIAL BOOKMARK CONTRIBUTIONS

Social bookmarks do not only carry important PR applications, but they also constitute a powerful pedagogical tool. For that reason, we will be using them as a way to get everyone to actively contribute course resources and to share them with the class.

You will be expected to contribute 10 high quality resources on the topic of social media and PR to Blackboard Scholar by November 18th (roughly 1 per week). These can be links to blog posts, videos, podcasts, slideshows, etc. The important thing is that they provide quality information for your peers as well as others interested in the study of social media and its PR applications. We will occasionally review these bookmarks in class. During those reviews, you will be expected to tell your classmates about the resource and why you decided to include it in our course resources repository.

We will spend some time in class learning how to add resources to Blackboard Scholar. If you are absent that day, or if you need further instruction, you will need to make arrangements with me to learn how to post your content to it. If you encounter technical difficulties adding your resources, you need to let me know before the due date. There will be no extensions given for content added late. Also be sure not to duplicate resources that have already been added by your classmates or me.

For each resource you add to Blackboard Scholar, you need to fill out the following fields:

- Bookmark Name: Give your bookmark a name if it doesn't already have one
- URL: The URL should be added automatically. If it isn't be sure to add it
- Description: Summarize the resource and explain why it is a good source to include
- Tags: Include a number of tags that describe the resource you've added (the same way you would tag your blog posts)
- Discipline Tag(s): Select "Communication studies" as the discipline tag
- Course Tag(s): Select the Course Tag for our class
- Status: Select "public"

Grading criteria:

1. Included 10 resources by the deadline (to make sure you don't add all 10 at once, you can only add 2 links on any given day)
2. Resources contain all necessary fields
3. Tags appropriately describe resources
4. Summary is comprehensive and clear
5. Rationale for inclusion of the resource is sound

Extra-credit opportunity: (this is optional)

Pick any topic you are personally interested in. This can be anything: a hobby, an issue you are researching for a paper, a concept you'd like to explore, etc. Using Scholar or a different social bookmarking service (i.e. del.icio.us, Diigo, etc.), locate someone who shares that interest.

To do that:

1. Bookmark a resource on your topic of interest. Pick a good one here. The more specific the resource, the easier the rest of the assignment will be
2. In your list of social bookmarks, look to see who else has bookmarked that resource and

what else they tend to tag. Examining their tag cloud will give you a good idea of what their interests are.

3. Keep looking until you identify someone who really fits your interests (i.e. who tags resources you would tag). This person should have bookmarked lots of pages on the topic of interest to you, and not just one or two. You may have to repeat steps 1-3 a few times to find that “perfect match” 😊
4. Write a one page profile of that person. What are their other tags? What interest categories does the tag cloud reveal? What do these tags suggest that person does for a living? Can you tell what field or profession they might be in?

EXAMS

These are comprehensive examinations based on material from your assigned texts, podcasts, lectures, and class discussions.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

CM = Citizen Marketers; NI = New Influencers; BB = Blackboard

Week 1		
8/26	Course Welcome	
8/28	Social media & Web 2.0	NI: introduction & ch. 1
Week 2		
9/02	Setting up blogs & RSS	CM: intro & ch. 3
9/04	Setting up blogs & RSS	BB: SXSW Podcast on Web 2.0
Week 3 – First blog posts & comments due this week		
9/09	Blogging Etiquette, Online Identity & Personal Brand	BB: Pew Study (part 1, 3 & 5)
9/11	Wikis & the participatory web	NI: ch. 2 & CM: ch. 2
Week 4 – Number of blog posts: 4; Number of blog comments: 4		
9/16	The key players in social media	NI: ch. 3 & CM: ch. 1
9/18	Social media and public relations	BB: SNCR Study; NI: ch. 7
Week 5 – Number of blog posts: 6; Number of blog comments: 6		
9/23	Corporate & nonprofit blogging	NI: ch. 5
9/25	Blogging as a PR tool	NI: ch. 6; BB: Brian Solis' Ebook
Week 6 – Number of blog posts: 8; Number of blog comments: 8		
9/30	Podcasting as a PR tool	NI: ch. 8
10/02	Guest Lecture: Camella Manges, Director of E-Marketing at SEU	BB: SXSW panel on social networking & branding
Week 7– Number of blog posts: 10; Number of blog comments: 10		
10/07	Producing podcasts	BB: SXSW Podcast on Podcasts
10/09	Producing & distributing podcasts/ Exam Review	BB
Week 8 – No blog posts or comments due this week		
10/14	Midterm Exam	
10/16	Other social media technologies: Twitter & Co.	CM: ch. 4

Week 9 – Number of blog posts: 12; Number of blog comments: 12		
10/21	RSS and its PR applications	NI: ch. 9
10/23	Tracking blogs & other social media <i>*Podcast Due by beginning of class</i>	NI: ch. 4 & BB
Week 10 – Number of blog posts: 14; Number of blog comments: 14		
10/28	Viral video and its use as a PR & marketing tool	NI: ch. 10 & CM: ch. 6
10/30	Producing video for the web	BB
Week 11 – Number of blog posts: 16; Number of blog comments: 16		
11/04	Basic video editing	BB
11/06	Social Media Relations	BB: Brian Solis' e-book
Week 12 – Number of blog posts: 18; Number of blog comments: 18		
11/11	Clue Train Manifesto	BB
11/13	Web Video discussion & critique <i>*Web video due by beginning of class</i>	BB
Week 13 – Number of blog posts: 20; Number of blog comments: 20		
11/18	The Future of Social Media <i>* Last day of Blogging & Scholar Assignments</i>	NI: ch. 11 & BB: Weinberger Podcast
11/20	NO CLASS – National Communication Association Conference	
Week 14		
11/25	NO CLASS – National Communication Association Conference	
11/27	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday	
Week 15		
12/02	Impact of Social Media on the PR Industry/ Measuring ROI	BB: SXSW Podcast on Marketing & People Media
12/04	Exam Review	

Final Exam: Monday, December 8, from 11:15 am - 1:15 pm