Course Format and Objectives

21st century advances in Web programming and electronic network technology have helped bring about some of the most significant developments in digital media since the emergence of graphic user interfaces in the early 1990s. In fact, programmers, designers and users alike have considered such transitions important enough to dub their collective emergence as Web 2.0 or the Web’s “second incarnation.” This course will provide a critical survey of some of the more recent, major developments in social media networking in order to gauge their transformative effect on electronic culture, marketing and interpersonal communication. With the advent of virtual communities, smart mobs, and life-streaming, traditional questions concerning collective social behavior and community politics have taken on renewed import. Issues in analyzing and understanding community behavior appear increasingly vital to the contemporary media landscape, as more and more people forsake conventional communication contexts to participate and engage in online production.

At a general level, this course seeks to introduce and adapt students to a variety of social media environments in order to develop new strategies for both reading and writing within today’s multi-cultural, screen-oriented, networked culture. Course work will centre upon the active online participation of students and both a collective and individual willingness to engage in an array of different media practices, including web forums, blogs, wikis, chat, Twitter and virtual worlds. The theoretical foundations of the course derive from primary scholarship on the relationship between mediated communication and human community. As a practicum, however, the course will enable participants to gain hands-on experience with techniques in chatting, blogging, tagging, wiki writing, tweeting and social media presentation. Such skills will culminate in a final online assignment due towards the end of the term, where students will be given the opportunity to strategize, plan, design and produce social media projects of their own.

Course Requirements

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Participation (Forums, Wiki, Scheduled Wimda Meetings)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Online Presentations</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Media Project</td>
<td>50%</td>
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**Primary Assignment: Social Media Project**

The final project will take the form of either a commercial endeavour or a public information site of the student’s own design. Using a current version of Drupal content management software, each student will produce a social media website, emphasizing a selective and critical composition of various Web 2.0 media resources for the production, organisation and distribution of original electronic content. Consistent with the design and purpose of social media production, a large percentage of the site’s content will be audience and/or user produced, requiring the student to incorporate specific applications for media sharing, news distribution, RTU and social narrative into the site’s design. Certain applications may be prioritised over others depending upon the project’s focus.

The online project will also provide experience and expertise in composing professional social media proposals able to demonstrate and assess strategic planning for an online information source. Each proposal will take the form of a 5-8 page project application, consisting of the following components:

- **Company/organization/project background** – provides the reader with context and understanding of the project’s mission, values and organisational structure.
- **Aims and Objectives** – what the project will accomplish within a pre-set time frame.
- **Methodology** – a brief section able to describe and rationalise the methodological approach behind the project’s development.
- **Purpose and Goal of Social Media** – a clear and concise description of the project’s relevance with respect to electronic social media and contemporary web technology.
- **Prioritized list of social media initiatives** – possible sub-projects associated with the project; for example, an initiative to develop a presence on Facebook to connect with potential future audiences, etc.
- **Implementation plan** – expected timeframes for project development, resources required, future augmentations.
- **Performance metrics** – a set of measurable performance metrics pre-established to help assess specific project accomplishments, achievements, etc.

The final component of the assignment will consist of a written report, assessing and interpreting both the process and management of the online project. The report should endeavour to situate the work within previously discussed and researched frameworks for social media development. Future research projects might be proposed based upon specific knowledge deficits encountered while performing the assignment.

All written assignments should conform to the guidelines for presentation set out in the class. The evaluative papers should be submitted in accordance with the MLA style sheet as laid out in the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. The correct use of sources and their documentation remain important factors in the grading schema.

Students are expected to abide by the NJIT Honor Code


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**Required Texts**

Selected Online texts and video links

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**Software Requirements**

This course requires some familiarity with various web development tools like Adobe Dreamweaver, Flash and Photoshop and the content management system Drupal.
Policies

MSPTC faculty and administrators use ONLY NJIT email accounts for sending important messages about the program, deadlines, courses, etc. Make sure you check your NJIT email account regularly. In fact, the best practice is to set your NJIT email to forward to the account you check most often.

NJIT is a computing-intensive university. Every NJIT student is provided with a software bundle that includes the most frequently used Microsoft products, virus protection, programming, design, and other tools. The retail value of this bundle is in excess of $2,000. As well, the NJIT Library provides access to articles in over 16,000 journal titles, almost all available online. Materials such as book, article, patent, thesis, report, can be ordered through the NJIT Interlibrary Loan / Document Delivery Service Office. The library staff will arrange for the delivery of books and photocopies of articles, either by mail or fax. For materials not owned by the NJIT library, the ILL Office will obtain them from another library. As well, the NJIT Library maintains a Virtual Reference Desk and an opportunity to have a synchronous conversation with a librarian.

In order to access these materials and maximize your learning experience, you will need

1. Windows 2000 Professional or Windows XP Professional high-speed internet connection access from a computer that is not behind a firewall. Access to Moodle and to synchronous chat are often prevented by many companies' security policies. Please check with your company if you plan to access this course from work.
2. Familiarity with using the computer as a tool of learning.
3. Fluency with Microsoft Word, and confidence in exploring the Internet.
4. Commitment to distance learning as a mode of education. You should be prepared to visit the course Web site daily and post observations in discussion groups. If technical problems arise, you will not let these stand in the way of obtaining material and submitting work.
Course Roadmap