



## **MKTG 535: SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY**

Course: 53:630:535:90

Term: Spring 2025

Professor: Nathan Fong

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Office Hours: T/Th 2:30 – 3:30

or by appointment

Note: please use the above address; please avoid using my Scarletmail address, which I do not check regularly.

### **OVERVIEW**

#### **Course Description**

This course explores how to use social media marketing to achieve strategic marketing goals. Using a mix of theoretical and practical exercises, students will learn to deploy social media as a strategic marketing asset. Objectives include learning and applying social media principles and evaluating how an organization's social media presence adds strategic value. Students will also learn to implement a social media plan, connecting strategic goals to tactical objectives and the social media tools used to listen to and engage with consumers. The course also provides the skills needed to manage and measure social media activity.

#### **Learning Goals/Objectives**

- Develop understanding of the principles underlying social interactions on digital platforms
- Connect an organization's use of social media to its strategic objectives
  - Identify how social media can create value
  - Use a structured process for setting objectives and planning a social media strategy
  - Understand the risks involved when an organization uses social media
- Understand how to choose the right tool or platform for strategic and tactical objectives

#### **Course Materials**

##### **Books**

The Hype Machine, by Sinan Aral

This book covers social media from a social scientific perspective, based on the latest research. We will cover this book one chapter per week and have weekly discussions.

<https://bit.ly/3zEuPAO>

Social Media Strategy: Tools for Professionals and Organizations, by Phillip G. Clampitt

This is a traditional text that provides useful frameworks for developing a social media strategy. The full text is available online through the Rutgers library:

<https://bit.ly/348L4aB>

#### **Communication**

##### **Canvas**

The course will rely heavily on Canvas to distribute materials and facilitate interaction. Please check the site often. It is a good forum to ask questions, even administrative ones, so other students with the same questions will get to see the answers.

### **Rutgers email**

All official communications with students will be done using the Rutgers email address provided to you. Please forward your Rutgers email to your personal email if necessary. **Not checking your Rutgers email is not an excuse for missing any communications.**

### **Social Media**

The course will make use of social media accounts for research, discussion, and projects. Students may need to use accounts on Instagram, X/Twitter, and other platforms for class activities; while you can make use of personal accounts, in some cases, you will need to or may prefer to create new accounts.

## **ASSESSMENT**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
<b>Book Discussion</b>	<b>10%</b>	Demonstrate mastery of the course material by writing a synopsis of the reading and build on it by leading a thoughtful discussion.
<b>Individual Assignments</b>	<b>20%</b>	Develop skills in analyzing and managing social media activity. Improves research skills, including the collection and analysis of managerially relevant data. Includes minor assignments where submissions will be shared on discussion threads.
<b>Participation</b>	<b>20%</b>	Active participation in class discussions. Asking and answering questions to enhance and demonstrate understanding of the material.
<b>Group Project: Platforms</b>	<b>25%</b>	Gain familiarity with the current state of the social media environment. Develop presentation skills for an online setting.
<b>Group Project: Compare and Repair</b>	<b>25%</b>	Apply social media skills to a real-world project. Improves skills in developing and delivering presentations. Multiple feedback opportunities provided.
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	

### **Grade Ranges**

A	90% and above	Highest grade
B+	85% up to 90%	Work of distinction
B	80% up to 85%	Work of distinction
C+	75% up to 80%	Average work
C	70% up to 75%	Average work
F	Below 70%	Failure without credit

### **Deadlines**

Unless indicated otherwise, all assignments must be turned in through the course site by the date and time specified. Assignments handed in after the deadline will have their scores reduced by 1% of the maximum score for every hour it is overdue. Please notify me in advance if you need to make alternative arrangements.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Readings

Most modules will have an assigned book chapter. Everyone is expected to have read the week's chapter before participating in the discussion. There will be some lectures posted that cover related concepts, but note that the lectures will not directly cover the material in the readings.

### Book Discussion (10%)

Each student will be assigned additional responsibilities for one of the weekly discussions. For a randomly assigned week (starting with Chapter 3 in Module 4), you will be required to submit a synopsis (about 1 page) of the reading and help lead that week's discussion. The synopsis and your proposed discussion questions will be due the night before the week you are assigned.

The instructor will compile the questions and post them to that week's discussion (since multiple students are assigned each week, there could be similar/redundant questions). The students assigned for the week should try to post follow-up questions, make clarifications, and generally try and foster engagement with the material.

You are allowed and encouraged to discuss the assignment with the other students assigned the same week, as well as the instructor, but the materials you submit are an individual assignment.

### Individual Assignments (20%)

The course has a variety of assignments that provide opportunities to develop skills related to social media. This includes learning tools for managing social media accounts, analyzing social media marketing activities of existing organizations, and research and analytical skills. Tentatively, these assignments will include:

1. Module 6: Intro to generative AI (5%)
2. Module 9: Sentiment analysis (5%)
3. Module 13: Content brief (5%)

The individual assignments also includes a set of around five discussion activities where your submissions should also be posted to corresponding threads for the class to discuss.

### Participation (20%)

Active participation improves the quality of the class for you and your fellow students. You should view class participation as an opportunity to ask and answer questions to enhance your understanding of the material or demonstrate such understanding, and suggest examples that connect the concepts in class to the real world. Comment on your classmates' posts when you read them, to let everyone else know that you've seen it. Positive feedback helps produce better discussion!

Most weeks will have two discussions. One will be a student-led discussion on the book chapter (though I will add questions of my own). The other will cover topics that I introduce in lectures. Small assignments may be included as part of the discussions (e.g. go find an example of X and report to the class).

In addition to addressing the discussion questions posted in each module, you can also use class discussion as a forum for topics related to social media marketing. Possible contributions include:

- Current events, news, media, advertisements, daily life
- Findings from your projects (particularly tips/ideas that can help your classmates)
- Connecting ideas from other classes, reporting on industry speakers or academic research
- Respond to other students' contributions – answer their questions and build on their ideas

**Group Project: Platforms (25%)**

The course will have two major group assignments that provide opportunities to develop teamwork and learn from other students' perspectives. The first will be to investigate and evaluate one of the major social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, Snapchat, and TikTok – each group will be assigned one of the platforms). This assignment will launch in Module 3 and conclude in Module 8. The key milestones are:

- Form groups (end of Module 3)
- Progress report (end of Module 5)
- Post recorded presentation (end of Module 7)
- Submit report (end of Module 8)

**Group Project: Compare and Repair (25%)**

The second major group assignment will be to compare how two organizations in related fields (e.g., Pepsi vs. Coke, Harvard vs. Yale) make use of social media, and suggest how to repair the organization's social media strategy that you deem less effective. It is up to each group to decide on the target organizations (during group formation, I will attempt to help form groups that are interested in similar industries). This assignment will launch in Module 10 and conclude in Module 15 (finals week – note there is no final exam). The key milestones are:

- Form groups (end of Module 10)
- Progress report (end of Module 12)
- Post recorded presentation (end of Module 14)
- Submit report (end of Module 15)

## ADMINISTRATIVE

### **Disability Services/Accommodations**

The University is committed to supporting the learning of all students and faculty will provide accommodations as indicated in a Letter of Accommodation issued by the Office of Disability Services (ODS). If you have already registered with ODS and have your letter of accommodations, please share this with me early in the course. If you have or think you have a disability (learning, sensory, physical, chronic health, mental health or attentional), please contact <https://success.camden.rutgers.edu/disability-services>.

Accommodations will be provided only for students with a letter of accommodation from ODS. Their services are free and confidential. Letters only provide information about the accommodation, not about the disability or diagnosis.

### **Academic Integrity**

The Academic Integrity policy can be found at <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/student-conduct-processes/academic-integrity/>

***Students are responsible for understanding the principles of academic integrity and abiding by them in all aspects of their work at the University.*** Students are also encouraged to help educate fellow students about academic integrity and to bring all alleged violations of academic integrity they encounter to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

Academic Integrity means that you (the student) must:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others,
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work,
- make sure that all work submitted as your own in a course activity is your own and not from someone else
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately
- treat all other students fairly with no encouragement of academic dishonesty

Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to ensure that:

- everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments
- all student work is fairly evaluated and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others
- the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered
- the reputation of the University for integrity is maintained and enhanced.

Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld. Violations are taken seriously and will be handled according to University policy.

### **Code of Student Conduct**

Rutgers University-Camden seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community, including in classroom space.

As a student at the University you are expected adhere to the Code of Student Conduct.

To review the code, go to the Office of Community Standards:

<https://deanofstudents.camden.rutgers.edu/student-conduct>

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means *"engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities."*

### **Online Conduct**

The following protocols on the codes of behavior reflect professional business norms on manners, courtesy, and respect. ***(In general, you should treat others as you would like others to treat yourself. Be mindful that what is***

***acceptable in a text or chatroom with friends may not be appropriate in a classroom or in an online conversation with an instructor.)***

**Never send offensive and insulting messages** (this is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct). If you disagree, say so and state your reasons. Social media is a very powerful tool for communication. However, it can be badly misused if it is not used correctly or professionally. For example, you may have personal and legitimate concerns with this course. However, other students, who do not have similar feelings, can be negatively influenced by your concerns. This will unnecessarily and negatively affect their overall experience of the course. Therefore, to minimize such an occurrence, please feel free to directly contact the instructor/tutor first to resolve any concerns that you may have to help ensure that everyone's online experience of this course is beneficial.

- Always guard against inciting others when it comes to content, opinions, etc. Avoid blaming or accusing others of wrongdoing.
- Do not start a volley of back-and-forth e-mails, with copies distributed to every student in the class.
- Copy the minimum number of people. That is, send e-mails to only the people you think should receive and will benefit from it.
- Treat all e-mails and postings as permanent forms of written record and do not assume that any e-mail communications are private, unless stated otherwise.
- Do not publicize your own or others' personal information (such as email, phone numbers, last names, etc.)

### **Artificial Intelligence Use**

AI is poised to have a considerable impact on both social media and digital marketing, so anyone interested in social media marketing needs at least a basic understanding of such tools. As such, the use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, DALL-E, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Conducting research and refining your ideas
- Generating content for your assignments
- Checking grammar and style

Any use of generative AI tools is subject to the following:

- You must acknowledge the use of AI tools and include a note explaining how you used them for any submission
- You are responsible for fact-checking any information obtained using AI tools
- Text transcripts should be saved and appended to your submission (does not count against length guidelines); for other media (such as images generated or edited using AI), citation of the product used will suffice

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Impersonating you in discussion contexts, such as using the tool to compose discussion board posts
- Writing your response to closed-book quizzes

Again, you are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (for instance, verifying that it does not violate intellectual property laws, or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be properly documented and cited in order to stay within university policies on academic honesty. Any assignment that is found to have used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways based on guidelines in this syllabus will be subject to report of a violation of Academic Integrity and thus the appropriate adjudication. When in doubt about permitted usage, please ask for clarification.

## COURSE OUTLINE (REFER TO CANVAS FOR DETAILS)

#	Date	Topics	Book Chapter	Assignments
1	1/21	Introduction		Intro Survey
2	1/28	Strategy	1. The New Social Age	
3	2/4	Social networks	2. The End of Reality	Group: Platforms
4	2/11	Network effects	3. The Hype Machine	
5	2/18	Social influence	4. Your Brain on Social Media	Progress (Platform)
6	2/25	Contagion	5. A Network's Gravity Is Proportional to Its Mass	IA1
7	3/4	Attribution	6. Personalized Mass Persuasion	Presentation (Platform)
8	3/11	Presentations		Report (Platform)
<b>Spring Break</b>				
9	3/25	Coordinates	7. Hypersocialization 8. Strategies for a Hypersocialized World	IA2
10	4/1	Channels	9. The Attention Economy and the Tyranny of Trends	Group: Compare and Repair
11	4/8	Content	10. The Wisdom and Madness of Crowds	
12	4/15	Connections	11. Social Media's Promise Is Also Its Peril	Progress (CR)
13	4/22	Corrections	12. Building a Better Hype Machine	IA3
14	4/29	Assessment		Presentation (CR)
15	5/8	Presentations		Report (CR)