

# J408: Social Media for Journalists

School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon  
2 credit workshop, Spring 2016

## Key information

**Instructor:** Damian Radcliffe [damianr@uoregon.edu](mailto:damianr@uoregon.edu)  
**Office:** 201 Allen Hall  
**Office hours:** 2.30pm-4.30pm Thursday  
**Telephone:** 541-346-7643 (Office) / 541-972-5531 (Cell)

**Class details:** Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2016, 12pm – 4.50pm, Allen 137  
Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016, 9am – 4.50pm, Allen 303  
Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016, 9am – 4.50pm, Allen 303

**Website:** <https://medium.com/social-media-for-journalists>

***NB: For this class you will need a smartphone, accounts on different social networks + Google and Medium.***

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## Course Background

This three day, two credit, workshop will improve your knowledge of how major social networks are being used by audiences, journalists and news publishers. Questions that we will explore include:

- What is the role of social media in the way that audiences find, consume and share news today?
- What are the implications of this for news organizations?
- How are they responding to these challenges?
- What are the characteristics of different social platforms and what does this mean for storytelling?
- How are different platforms used by news organizations to tell stories?
- What impact does social media have on the role of journalists in 2016? How is that role changing?

You will leave the workshop with a grasp of these key issues.

## Learning outcomes

By the end of this workshop you will be able to:

1. Understand and describe some of the major trends in social media usage.
2. Describe characteristics of major social platforms; including best practice for them.
3. Know where to look for relevant industry information/data/analysis about social media.
4. Use industry standard tools, such as Google Drive and Medium, for collaborative and individual work.

5. Have a working knowledge of the following 8 social networks / types of channels:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Tumblr
- Pinterest
- Live Video services such as Meerkat, Periscope and Facebook Live
- Messaging based apps like WeChat, WhatsApp and Line

6. Be able to critique your own ideas/output – and those of your peers – on social media topics.

### **Approach**

Learning methods will include:

- **Discussing** key market data and trends, developing your understanding of their implications.
- **Researching and analysing** emerging issues and players.
- **Presenting** your own research and social media output to your class peers and instructor.
- **Writing high quality journalistic work**, both in-class and in your own time.
- **Publishing** your work on a public facing class website: <https://medium.com/social-media-for-journalists>

### **Estimated student workload**

Most of the work will be completed in class, but there will be three pieces of work which you will be expected to finish outside of class. The first of these – a write-up from Yvonne Leow’s talk – must be completed one week after her presentation. The second, your “Hot Topic” article, is due two weeks after the final day of class. You will also have an extra 48 hours – if required – to refine/complete your “User Guide” after the workshop.

Extra credit will also be offered for a guest lecture on May 27<sup>th</sup> pertinent to this class.

### **Wider industry reading**

Recommended sites include: *Nieman Lab*, *Digiday*, *TheMediaBriefing*, *Poynter*, *MediaShift*, *Social Media Times*, *daily email newsletters from Pew Journalism Center* and the *American Press Institute* and many others. These cover the types of topics we will be discussing in class. I recommend adding them to your daily reading.

### **Grading/Weighting**

Activity	Points	% of total grade
1. Class participation	250	25%
2. Write-up, Yvonne Leow / Gordon Friedman talk	200	20%
3. User Guides	300	30%
4. Post-workshop “Hot Topic” article	250	25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

*NB: You will be docked one grade for every day, after deadline, that any work is late.*

- Extra credit will also be given for people attending the following talk later on in the term:

*Demystifying: Journalism and Silicon Valley. Friday, May 27, 2016, 12-1 p.m. in 140 Allen Hall*  
Claire Wardle, Director of Research, Tow Center for Digital Journalism, Columbia University

## **Assessment Criteria**

You will be given more detailed assignment notes and explanations ahead of each task. But, broadly speaking, for this class you will be graded in four different work areas.

Three of these are written pieces (one of which also includes a presentation element,) while the other assessed activity is based on your active participation in class. Throughout this workshop, you will be engaging in creative work, research, analysis, pitching and feedback sessions akin to those that you can expect to participate in within a newsroom or agency setting.

### **1. Class participation (25%)**

*You're expected to be very active in class.* As a result, a quarter of your grade for this course is based on your participation in this class. This reflects the input and interaction you are expected to contribute over 2.5 days.

The grade for this element of the class is made up of a number of components / tasks:

- **Active participation in class discussions**, including materials presented by guest speakers, your instructor and peers.
- **Page One meetings:** Newsrooms historically started each day with a discussion about the top stories that they would feature the following day. These stories would be identified through the wires, your contacts and other reading. Journalists would pitch ideas and discuss the merits of them. We'll kick off the Saturday and Sunday of this class with a similar process.

On Saturday, you'll have 25 minutes to review your online sources (e.g. newsletters, websites, social media feeds etc.) before we have a 35-minute roundtable discussion to share your findings. Each student will bring two news stories / developments in the field of social media to the table.

You'll need to summarize each idea pithily (30 seconds or less) as this is a top-level pitch to the group to see whether this is a story we decide merits further investigation. We'll cover between 20-30 stories in 35 minutes, so expect to learn how to pitch ideas – and feedback – in a succinct and concise manner.

*On Sunday, we'll do things a little differently.* In the first instance, we'll look to see what big stories have occurred during the past 24 hours. We'll then agree a topic to explore in more depth.

Half of the group will research how that topic has been covered across specific social networks. The other half will explore how major publishers, as diverse as *BuzzFeed* and the *New York Times*, have covered this topic across different social channels.

From this, you'll deduce how social platforms are used for different types of storytelling and we'll also undertake some paper exercises, producing – and critiquing – content for social media on this chosen topic.

- **Field Assignment:** You will work in pairs for large parts of the weekend. With an allocated partner you will produce a “User Guide” for a selected social network, as well as go into the field to tell a story using this selected social channel.

Your learning from this field exercise – coupled with further desk research – will inform the materials which make up your “User Guide.” You will present your fieldwork to the class. The group will be expected to provide feedback on the content you have produced, and you will also be expected to review your own efforts through a critical eye.

## **2. Write-up, Yvonne Leow or Gordon Friedman talk (20%)**

Yvonne Leow is Senior Snapchat Editor at Vox. She will be speaking on Friday, May 20, 2016, 12-1 p.m. in 140 Allen Hall about how Vox uses Snapchat Discover. We will start this workshop by attending this talk (which I have organized, and which is open to people outside of this class) and then chatting afterwards with Yvonne.

You will write up your learning from this talk/meeting as your first assignment for this class (600-800 words).

Vox joined Snapchat Discover on November 23, 2015. Six months in, how is Vox using Snapchat? What lessons have they learned so far? With 6 billion video views a day, Snapchat’s recent growth and expansion has been impressive, especially amongst millennials. So, how does Snapchat support Vox’s audience, content and revenue strategies? And how is using Discover different from harnessing other social platforms?

Yvonne and her team have published dozens of stories, ranging from climate change, ISIS to Star Wars, on Snapchat’s Discover channel. Previously, she was a John S. Knight Fellow at Stanford University where she researched how to deliver news through mobile messaging platforms. Yvonne’s previous roles include being director of video at Digital First Media’s Project Thunderdome, and a senior associate at North Base Media, a venture capital firm that invests in digital media startups in emerging markets. She was also the west regional video producer the Associated Press and a video journalist at the Seattle Times.

The feature will be uploaded to our Medium page. This task will demonstrate your ability to report from an event and to be able to place this learning in a wider context.

## **3. User Guides (30%)**

*How do you use some of the biggest social networks? What constitutes best practice? And what should be avoided? How do major brands and news providers use these channels? What can we learn from them?*

In this exercise you will work in pairs to develop an expertise in one of eight social networks.

1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. Instagram
4. Snapchat
5. Tumblr
6. Pinterest
7. Live Video services such as Meerkat, Periscope and Facebook Live
8. Messaging based apps like WeChat, WhatsApp and Line

You will exclusively use this app/service for your fieldwork efforts; sharing your output – and the lessons learned from producing it – with the class. The group will also critique your field efforts.

Alongside this, you will undertake desk research to determine best practice for these social networks, based on articles found online and your own analysis of how stories are covered by media outlets on these channels.

Using this desk and field research you will produce a “How To” guide for journalists which demonstrates the best ways to use your assigned social network. Your guide will include instructions, examples and information on the audiences who use these channels. A potential template will be provided for this.

You will present your draft “Guide” to the class on Sunday; with the final version uploaded to our Medium channel by no later than 23:59 on the Tuesday after class.

For inspiration visit: <https://onlinejournalismblog.com/2016/04/21/guides-snapchat-instagram-slack-tumblr-twitter-vine-youtube/> and follow the links.

Through this exercise you will get to deploy your own research and analysis skills, whilst also demonstrating your ability to undertake creative work; and the ability to distil key messages (in both written form online and in a class presentation) about the journalistic potential of various social platforms. In doing this, you will develop an expertise in a given network, as well as learn about seven others based on the research and creative efforts of your classmates! All “User Guides” will be uploaded to our Medium page.

#### **4. “Hot topic” pitch and article (25%)**

- *How has a campaign or brand effectively (or not as the case may be) used social media?*
- *What is the social media strategy of a given publication/news outlet?*
- *What emerging issues do brands, agencies and publishers need to consider in the world of social?*
- *Why is a particular social network growing? What is its appeal?*

These are examples of topics that you will explore as part of a 800-1,200 word article that you will produce in the two weeks following the end of this class. The feature should include desk research and interviews with at least one relevant industry source. You will publish this to our Medium site.

You will pitch two ideas to the group on Sunday afternoon and the best of these will be commissioned to go ahead. Ideas may come from discussions in class your own reading or something you would like to explore but that, perhaps, we didn’t have time to cover.

Examples:

- <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/seven-reasons-why-snapchat-is-so-hot-right-now>
- <https://www.themediabriefing.com/article/how-the-bbc-is-harnessing-mobile-apps-to-engage-global-audiences>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/dec/23/donald-trump-social-media-strategy-internet-republican-nomination-president>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/12/10/reading-6000-of-his-tweets-has-convinced-us-donald-trump-is-a-social-media-master/>

## Grading criteria

I will be looking for good writing, strong imagery, interesting stories, clarity of message and good use of formats.

- A is reserved for professional quality work where all the elements successfully come together.
- B is excellent work that nears professional quality with a few flaws.
- C is average. Your work fulfills the requirements of the assignment.
- D is sub-standard work with multiple flaws that prevent it from being average quality.
- F is unacceptable quality with fatal flaws in either audio or writing. Also non-delivery.

GRADING	A	B	C	D	F
<b>Strong lead: Informative hard (summary) news lead or compelling anecdotal opening.</b>	Vivid, telling detail.	Provides essential information.	Essential information but lacking clarity, conciseness and/or detail.	Not a direct lead and/or important context and information missing.	Factual error(s). Sound / vision error(s).
<b>Essential information covered.  Story / Analysis logically organized.</b>	Who, what, where, when and why (and the how if appropriate) answered.	5 Ws covered but story not organized clearly with most important information at the top.	Essential information provided but disorganized.	Essential information missing and/or disorganized.	Does not tell a story.
<b>Appropriate use of quotes, actuality and attribution.</b>	Strong use of quotes and/or actuality, with best high in story. Attribution provided when needed.	Appropriate use of quotes and attribution, including actuality.	Quotes and attribution provided.	Quotes or attribution missing.	Quotes and attribution missing.
<b>Clear and concise writing. Appropriate style.</b>	Clear and concise writing (for the ear or an essay). Appropriate style deployed.	Basically clear and concise.	Thorough editing needed to meet standards.	Writing style is inappropriate for a news story.	Unintelligible.
<b>Factually accurate. Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.</b>	Mechanically sound, no errors.	1-2 minor errors. Style inconsistent.	1 major error such as a poor sound edit, or more than two minor errors.	2 major errors and multiple minor issues.	Fatal flaws: Factual errors, misspelling of proper names, multiple grammar, spelling errors.
<b>Appropriate use of formats.</b>	Uses the best/effective format to tell a story.	Solid, but with some scope for improvement in tech/format.	Readable/Viewable/Watchable. Not ground-breaking.	Hard to consume e.g. off mic, poorly written etc.	Unlistenable/Unwatchable/Unreadable

## **Course policies**

### ***Attendance***

Non-attendance and/or failure to complete assignments on time will be graded with an F for that task.

Please notify me, with as much prior notice as possible, if you must miss part of the class.

### ***Late work***

If work will be delivered late, with good reason, or you're having problems with an assignment then let me know ASAP. I'm here to help and will always seek to be flexible where I can. However, if reasons are not provided, then you will be docked one grade for every day, after deadline, that any work is late.

### ***Accessibility***

The University of Oregon seeks to create inclusive learning environments. If aspects of this course result in barriers to your participation, please notify me as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact the Accessible Education Center (AEC), Web: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/> - Phone: 541-346-1155.

### ***Crisis Center***

The University of Oregon Counseling Center provides students with confidential telephone crisis intervention 24/7. The number is 541-346-3227.

### ***Diversity***

Open inquiry, freedom of expression, and respect for differences are fundamental to a comprehensive and dynamic education. SOJC is committed to upholding these ideals by encouraging the exploration, engagement, and expression of divergent perspectives and diverse identities.

Discrimination of any kind, disrespect for others, and inequity in educational opportunity are not acceptable. Students, faculty, and staff are expected at all times to maintain the School of Journalism and Communication's high standards of ethical and compassionate conduct. Please see me if you need help or have any questions.

### ***Academic integrity***

The U of O policy on academic dishonesty will be observed throughout this course. Plagiarizing and/or cheating will result in an automatic failure of the course. To avoid this, you should read:

<http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>

We will also talk about the importance of proper attribution of your sources and providing credit where it is due. Careers can – and have been – destroyed as a result of breaking these rules. Don't make the same mistakes!

### ***Technology***

Papers should be submitted as Word Docs in Canvas so that they can be reviewed and graded through the "Track Changes" function in Microsoft Word. This is also more environmentally friendly than printed copies.

Mobile phones should be turned off in class, unless we're using them for a task.

Laptops are allowed, but there will be "lids down" moments throughout the course.

### ***Questions***

If you want to know more about anything mentioned here, or you think that there's a policy which is missing, then please do not hesitate to tell me.

## Course Schedule

*This schedule is a draft and is subject to change, depending on student interests, inclement weather and other unplanned – and currently unknown - factors. You will be made aware of any major changes if/when they arise.*

### Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2016: 12pm – 4.50pm, Allen 137

#### **Afternoon**

- **Presentation: *Demystifying: How Vox uses Snapchat Discover.***  
Yvonne Leow, Senior Snapchat Editor at Vox, in 140 Allen Hall 12-1pm
- **Further discussion with Yvonne:** to gather more material for your assignment 1-1.30pm
- *Break* To 1.45pm
- **Introduction:** Overview of the course 1.45-2.30pm
- **Icebreaker:** Getting to know each other
- **Presentation and Discussion:** Social Media in 2016 2.30-3.30pm
- *Break* To 3.45pm
- **“Experts” assignment:** allocation of social media platforms 4pm+

### Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016: 9am – 4.50pm, Allen 303

#### **Morning**

- **Group Exercise:** Page One meeting, Social Media news/trends (*prep and discussion*) 9-10am
- **Discussion:** With Gordon Friedman, UO alum, Salem Statesman 10-11am  
<http://www.grfriedman.com/>
- *Break and Fieldwork* 11-1.30pm
- **Field exercise:** live reporting from the Saturday market using your assigned platforms

#### **Afternoon**

- **Team report back:** project share and discussion on field exercise 1.30 -2.30pm
- **Advanced Social Media Skills presentation/discussion** 2.30– 3.30pm
- **“Hot topic” prep:** (*to be researched and completed as homework*) 3.30pm+



## Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2016: 9am – 4.50pm, Allen 303

### **Morning**

- **Group Exercise:** One issue, different platforms 9-11.00am

*Break*

- **Project Work:** Creation of 8 x “How to Guides” 11.00-1.00pm

*Break including Lunch*

### **Afternoon**

- **Presentation and Discussion:** “How to Guides” 2.00 – 3.00pm

*Break*

- **“Hot topic” pitches** 3.15-4.30pm
- **Evaluations and Next Steps** 4.30–4.45pm

## **After class: Submission Deadlines (Canvas and Medium)**

1. User Guide: Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> May 23:59PM
2. Yvonne Leow talk: Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May 23:59PM
3. “Hot Topic” feature: Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June 23:59PM

*NB: You will be docked one grade for every day, after deadline, that any work is late.*

- Extra credit will also be given for people attending the following talk later on in the term:

Demystifying: Journalism and Silicon Valley. Friday, May 27, 2016, 12-1 p.m. in 140 Allen Hall  
*Claire Wardle, Director of Research, Tow Center for Digital Journalism, Columbia University*

The past five years have seen the most significant shift in news publishing since the invention of the printing press. Large social media platforms are becoming the principal mechanisms for delivering news to global audiences. What does this new reality mean for the platforms, news organizations and audiences in terms of business models, algorithmic transparency, privacy and ethical frameworks?

Claire Wardle leads the Tow Center’s research exploring the intersection of journalism’s democratic function and the new tools of the digital age. Alongside this, she is the co-founder of Eyewitness Media Hub and a member of the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on Social Media.

Claire was previously director of News Services for Storyful, senior social media officer at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a lecturer at Cardiff University, and a consultant and trainer on social media. In 2009, Claire designed the social media training program for BBC news and rolled it out across the organization.

*NB: If you took my J408 Journalism Today class earlier this term, then you are eligible for extra credit for both classes if you attend the above session on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May.*