

Syracuse University | Newhouse School
JNL 530 Mobile and Social Media Journalism – Spring 2023
MW | Newhouse 3, 253 | 12:45-2:05 p.m.

PROFESSOR

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Office Hours: Mondays 10 a.m.-noon

Wednesdays 2:10-4:10 p.m.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course critically examines how journalists and news organizations are using emerging forms of social media and mobile platforms. Students gain hands-on experience by experimenting with social media and mobile devices for newsgathering, distribution, and audience engagement. Students produce a portfolio of multimedia stories and build their own professional journalistic brand. An emphasis is placed on critically assessing the credibility and authenticity of user-generated content. Students will also learn how to use analytics tools to monitor and analyze the effectiveness of their mobile and social media activity. (3 Credits)

COURSE OVERVIEW

TikTok. Instagram. Twitter. Facebook. These are some of the social media tools altering how journalists do their jobs and how people consume news today. This course prepares you to evaluate and use social media and mobile devices as professional journalists. By the end of the course, you will have the fundamental mobile and social media skills that news organizations are seeking from today's journalists. You will learn by "doing." You will build your own professional social media brand and produce a portfolio of stories using social media and mobile devices/apps.

You and your classmates are future industry leaders, so we will also critically assess future developments related to mobile and social media in journalism. This course will foster your ability to apply the core values of journalism to emerging media forms in productive, innovative, and intelligent ways. The concepts and skills we will tackle include: maintaining a professional social media brand; finding story ideas and sources via social media; using social media and mobile devices/apps for newsgathering and production; social media ethics; audience engagement; and analytics.

COURSE GOALS

- Effectively use social media for newsgathering, distribution, and audience engagement.
- Research and locate reliable information from social media to enhance your reporting, and at the same time, identify misleading and unbalanced content.

- Gain the technical skills of mobile newsgathering through the use of mobile devices and apps to gather, produce, and distribute news content.
- Create and enhance your own professional brand on social media platforms.
- Collaborate as a news team to contribute original reporting to [NCC News](#) and to manage its social media accounts.
- Become an engaged and active participant of the online community of the beat that you have chosen.
- Use analytics platforms to monitor and analyze social media engagement and success.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of mobile and social media strategies and policies in news organizations.
- Understand the public's active role in the news production process, and the resulting impact on journalism.
- Understand the flexibility, innovativeness, and entrepreneurial spirit needed to be successful in this evolving industry.

REQUIRED READINGS & MATERIALS

- *Mobile and Social Media Journalism: A Practical Guide for Multimedia Journalism 2nd Edition* (Routledge, 2021) by Anthony Adornato.
- You will be able to reserve, through the CAGE, a mobile journalism kit.
- To be successful in this class and as a journalist, you must be well-informed about emerging technologies and their impact on journalism. Here are my go-to sources to stay up-to-date on the latest mobile and social media journalism trends, tips, and skills training. I've provided Twitter handles, website links, and links for you to subscribe to e-newsletters.

Poynter

[@Poynter](#) and [Poynter Newsletter](#)

Pew Research Center

[@pewjournalism](#) and [Pew Research Newsletter](#)

Nieman Lab

[@NiemanLab](#) and [Nieman Newsletter](#)

First Draft News

[@firstdraftnews](#), [firstdraftnews.com](#), and [First Draft Newsletter](#)

NPR Training

[@nprtraining](#), [training.npr.org](#), and [NPR Training Newsletter](#)

BBC Academy

[@BBCAcademy](#) and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/>

ACEJMC VALUES AND COMPETENCIES

The Newhouse School is committed to classroom and learning that achieves ACEJMC professional values and competencies. These include the core areas of freedom of speech, ethics, diversity, critical thinking, research, writing, and use of tools and technologies related to the field. See [this full list](#) of ACEJMC values and competencies.

DIVERSITY PRINCIPLES

The Newhouse School practices inclusivity in student, faculty and staff populations in order to create an academic environment that embraces a diversity of thought and acceptance of all people regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation or societal, political, cultural, economic, spiritual or physical differences.

It's important to broaden your journalism experiences, with guidance from me, by including in coursework ethnic, racial and religious minorities, people with disabilities, gay men and lesbians and other similar groups and issues that affect these groups. This includes, but is not limited to, developing sensitivity to language and images. The intent is to ensure your work reflects the diversity of the community and that you're exposed to diverse ideas and perspectives

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S POLICY ON ATTENDANCE

Attendance in classes is expected in all courses at Syracuse University. It is a federal requirement that faculty promptly notify the University of students who do not attend or cease to attend any class. Faculty will use OrangeSAccess to alert the Registrar and Financial Aid Office on non-attendance. For more information visit: [Information for Students: Non-attendance or Stopped Attending](#).

Absences → More than 48 hours: Students should contact the Dean of Students Office when they are absent from class for an extended period of time. This office staff will require documentation for the absence and will utilize OrangeSAccess to send notifications to faculty to verify that documentation has been received for the stated absence. Contact information may be found at: <https://ese.syr.edu/dean-of-students/>. Barnes Center at the Arch staff does not provide medical excuse notes for students. When Barnes Center staff determine it is medically necessary to remove a student from classes, staff will coordinate with the Dean of Students office to notify faculty.

Absences → Less than 48 hours: talk to Professor Adornato. The course-specific policies are:

- Come to class, be seated and ready to go at the start. Late too often? It will lower your grade. I don't allow you to make up work you miss because of your tardiness.
- You will lose one letter grade from your final grade for the first unexcused absence, so talk to Prof. Adornato.

- Additional unexcused absences will result in course failure. Here's how BDJ defines absences:
 - **Unexcused absences** are all absences for which the student offers no explanation to the instructor in writing or in person prior to the next scheduled class session. Unexcused absences do not fit either of the definitions below.
 - **Excused absences** include but are not limited to: absences due to your illness, a death or illness in the student's family or observance or a religious holiday. Please let me know by email in advance if possible, or as soon afterwards as possible. Excused absences are not unlimited and can affect a student's grade.
 - **Explained absences** include any event which the student chooses to attend or any obligation s/he chooses to fulfill rather than attending class. The student must inform the instructor of such an absence as far in advance as possible. An explained absence may have a detrimental effect on a student's grade. I may decide to count such an absence as excused. I will strive to be consistent in the exercise of such judgment.

DISABILITY-RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to meet with me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process.

If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please visit Center for Disability Resources. Please call (315) 443-4498 or email disabilityresources@syr.edu for more detailed information.

CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to begin this process: <https://disabilityresources.syr.edu/>.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY

Syracuse University recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe holy days according to their traditions. Steps to follow to request accommodations for the observance of religious holidays can be found at: <https://policies.syr.edu/policies/university-governance-ethics-integrity-and-legal-compliance/religious-observances-policy/>.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health and overall well-being are significant predictors of academic success. As such it is essential that during your college experience you develop the skills and resources effectively to navigate stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns. Please familiarize yourself with the range of resources the Barnes Center provides and seek out support for mental health concerns as needed (<https://experience.syracuse.edu/bewell/>). Counseling services are

available 24/7, 365 days, at 315-443-8000, and I encourage you to explore the resources available through the Wellness Leadership Institute:

<https://experience.syracuse.edu/bewell/wellness-leadership-institute/>.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) sets forth requirements regarding the privacy of student records. FERPA governs both the access to and release of those records, known as education records, and the information they contain. Under FERPA, faculty have a legal responsibility to protect the confidentiality of student records. For additional information about FERPA and Syracuse University's FERPA policy, see [Compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) or contact the Office of the Registrar (315.443.3535).

PRONOUNS/NAMES

Syracuse University encourages, but does not require, community members to share the pronouns they use for themselves. In My Slice "My Profile," all students may choose from a list of pronouns or designate "no pronouns" if they prefer only the use of their names. Students may also share a preferred name there. For information on designating personal pronouns and preferred names, go to answers.syr.edu/PronounFAQ or answers.syr.edu/PreferredNameFAQ.

CONTENT WARNING

In this class, we may discuss, read, or view materials that could result in emotional and psychological discomfort. The purpose of these materials is to encourage intellectual growth and inquiry about important issues. However, if your response to any materials becomes, or you anticipate that it may become, one that makes it difficult for you to learn and engage, please communicate with me so we can ensure your success in the class. My goal is to build a classroom community that allows for learning and growth, meets the course objectives, and fosters engagement and communication among all who share this space.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors.

Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. SU students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and

provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. **Any established violation in this course may result in course failure** regardless of violation level.

To clarify standards for this course:

- It is unethical to fabricate a soundbite, make up information or stage natural sound.
- Your interviewing and writing must be your individual effort. Your professors encourage you to brainstorm ideas and to discuss story structure/terms/word usage with other students, the IA or your professor. But then write the story yourself, without referring to another’s copy, or getting others to edit your work. This includes family members.
- Use of AP material as a resource is legal because Newhouse has a license to use the AP service. But it’s not good practice to cut and paste AP copy into your story. It is unethical to copy material directly from other media outlets.
- It is a conflict of interest to use a good friend, family member or work colleague/boss as a source in a story. If you have questions about ethics, please see your professor.

CLASS ETIQUETTE

- Laptops and mobile devices are to be used for class purposes during our meetings – not for personal social interactions.
- In-class critiques of your classmates’ work will be constructive. Feedback should be about the work and never personal. Be respectful of each other’s effort.

GRADING CRITERIA

Grade	Value		Grade	Value
A	93-100		C+	77-79
A-	90-92		C	73-76
B+	87-89		C-	70-72
B	83-86		D	61-69
B-	80-82		F	60 and below

Below is the basic grading criteria. **For each major assignment, I’ll provide more detailed grading criteria/rubric in class.** Generally, you’ll be graded on clarity, organization, accuracy, fairness/balance, completeness/omissions, grammar, spelling, and ability to meet deadlines. My grading in this course will also take in to account your creativity and innovativeness.

In the journalism business there are no absolutes. Some things may work, others may not. It’s my duty to determine your effectiveness in turning an idea (the abstract) into a finished project that will be acceptable by industry standards. You have to rely on my experience in the industry, and academe, to provide you with the most accurate representation of feedback you’ll receive in a

newsroom.

A 93-100% | A- 90-92%

Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment. Accurate, clear, and comprehensive work. Stories are well-written, well-researched, and require only minor copy editing (i.e., they would be published).

B+ 87-89% | B 83-86% | B- 80-82%

Strong performance demonstrating a satisfactory level of attainment. Stories require more than minor editing and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission.

C+ 77-79% | C 73-76% | C- 70-72%

Needs work. Stories need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors.

D 61-69%

A marginal performance. Work requires excessive rewriting and has numerous errors, and should not have been submitted.

Below 60%

An unacceptable performance. Work failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, has numerous errors, or both. Proper names, locations, and titles have to be accurate and spelled correctly.

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Deadlines are exact—just like in the news business. If you turn any assignment in after the assigned deadline, you'll receive an "F" for the assignment.

Multimedia Packages (30% of grade): You will produce four stories. At least two must be focused on your beat. For each story, you will use a mobile device and apps for the majority of newsgathering and production. You will also be expected to use social media tools to engage with your online community during the reporting process. I will post a weekly to-do list on our website so that you know how many times and the type of content to share on social media while you're in the field reporting. Before going in the field, we will hold in-class editorial meetings. You must explain why the story matters, who is impacted, potential interviewees, and how you will use social media and mobile apps in the newsgathering and production of the story, among other items.

On the days your packages are due, you will:

- Have at least two classmates edit your story.
- Uploaded to Blackboard the template submission form that I will give you for each reporting round. The document must include: final text of the story, the link to the story on your website, a list of sources consulted, and the names of your editors.
- Create a Wakelet that contains all the social media items required during the reporting process. Include the Wakelet link in the template document you post to Blackboard.

After publishing the stories to your personal website, I'll let you know in my feedback if you should also post them to NCC News. Most stories are posted to NCC News after a round or two of editing.

Social Media Activity/Portfolio (25% of grade): You will develop your own professional social media portfolio during this class. Your portfolio will include a blog as well as profiles and engagement on social media sites. Part of your social media activity involves becoming active in the online community of your beat. You should consistently engage with related social media users (RTs, replies, and @ mentions) and use hashtags associated with your beat. During the semester, we will conduct peer evaluations, so you and your classmates can give each other feedback. Analytics will help to shed light on your effectiveness. At the end of the semester, you will present your portfolio to the class. I will post a weekly to-do list on the class website. All items must be completed by 11:59 p.m., Saturday. For this class, the week runs from Sunday to Saturday.

Blog Posts (20% of grade): During most weeks that stories are not due, you will complete two blog posts (approx. 400 words each). The topics of the posts will vary. Sometimes you will have to address a specific question related to social media, other times you're free to post about any topic related to your beat or mobile and social media journalism. The goal is to develop your own blog voice and thoughtful discussions. Your blog posts will also allow you to reflect on your work in this class.

Social Media Strategy: Scams and Disinformation Reporting Project (15% of grade): This semester [The NewsHouse](#) has a team of reporters working on a special project related to scams and disinformation. The website will launch at the end of the semester. Student in this course will serve as the social media strategists for this project. In short, you will develop and execute a social media plan for Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram. This will be a semester-long project, culminating in the launch later in the semester.

Editor Role (10% of grade): Once during the semester, you will serve as editor of the NCC News social media platforms. You will develop and execute a social media plan for NCC News. During this reporting period, you will not be responsible for producing an individual story.

IN-CLASS CRITIQUES AND FEEDBACK ON ASSIGNMENTS

There will be regular in-class critiques of your work. You should offer constructive, honest comments on a project as it's shown in class. Pay close attention to the comments I make during class critiques. My remarks often can be applied to your work, even if it's someone else's work that's being reviewed.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND ETHICS

Students are expected to follow the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) Code of Ethics. I expect that you'll be exceedingly honest, fair, and responsible. View policy: https://www.rtdna.org/content/rtdna_code_of_ethics.

When arranging and conducting interviews for class, act professionally. Address people on the phone or via email in a courteous, business-like manner. When you in the field to report, dress appropriately. By conducting yourself in a professional manner, people will take you more seriously and afford you more respect.

USE OF ACADEMIC WORK

Academic work completed during a semester may be used by professors for educational purposes in courses during the semester. Students' registration and continued enrollment constitute consent for this purpose. Before using students' work for educational purposes in subsequent semesters, professors will either request students' permission in writing and render the work anonymous by removing all personal identification.

CLASS SCHEDULE

(This schedule is a flexible outline of the material we expect to cover in this class. Expect changes, additions, and deletions as the needs of this class and other circumstances dictate.)

WEEK ONE (Jan. 18)

- Forces at the Gate: An Active Audience
- Navigating Change: The Mobile-First Newsroom
- Your Social Media Brand: Who Do You Want To Be?
- Finding a Niche/Beat

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List

WEEK TWO (Jan. 23 & 25)

- Finding a Niche/Beat Continued
- Social Media Audit
- Personal Website and NCC News Set-up
- Introduction to Blogging
- Introduction to Scams and Disinformation project

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Two blog posts next week

WEEK THREE (Jan. 30 & Feb. 1)

- Navigating Change: The Mobile-First Newsroom Revisited
- Writing and Video Fundamentals
- The Mobile Journalist and Must-have Apps
- Twitter Lists
- Scams and Disinformation team assignment for the semester

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Three story pitches

WEEK FOUR (Feb. 6 & 8)

- Story Pitches
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Social Media Optimization/Engagement (SMO)
- Social Newsgathering and Listening: Story Ideas, Sources, and Content
- Social Collaboration and Curation: Crowdsourcing
- Diverse Sourcing

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Package #1 due next Wednesday

WEEK FIVE (Feb. 13 & 15)

- Writing Mobile-Friendly Web Stories
- Publishing to NCC News
- Package #1 due Wednesday

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Two blog posts next week and three story pitches

WEEK SIX (Feb. 22 & 27)

- Review Stories and Story Pitches
- Writing Check-up
- Readable Videos and Social Graphics
- Twitter Cards
- Tweeting Your Beat Tips

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Package #2 due next Wednesday

WEEK SEVEN (Feb. 20 & 22)

- Audience Analytics
- Using Mobile Devices and Social Media During Live Events/Breaking News
- Emerging Forms of News Engagement: IGTV, TikTok, smart speakers, e-newsletters, etc.
- Package #2 due Wednesday

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Two blog posts next week and three story ideas due after Spring Break

WEEK EIGHT (Feb. 27 & March 1)

- Review Stories and Story Pitches
- Social Media Policies, Ethics and Diversity
- Verification and Authenticity of Information
- Location, Location, Location: Geo-location Sleuthing

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Package #3 due next Wednesday

WEEK NINE (March 6 & 8)

- Fake News: The Spread of Misinformation and Disinformation
- Social Media Analytics Revisited
- Package #3 due Wednesday

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do list
- *Two blog posts next week and three story ideas

WEEK TEN

No Class – Spring Break

WEEK ELEVEN (March 20 & 22)

- Review Stories and Story Pitches
- Mobile and Social Media Jobs in Newsrooms

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Package #4 due next Wednesday

WEEK TWELVE (March 27 & 29)

--Package #4 due Wednesday

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Two blog posts and three story pitches next week

WEEK THIRTEEN (April 3 & 5)

- Review Stories
- Guest Speaker
- Discussion of your social media brand and analytics

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Package #5 due next Wednesday

WEEK FOURTEEN (April 10 & 12)

- Website check-up
- Discussion of your social media brand and analytics
- Package #5 due Wednesday

Assignment:

- *Weekly To-do List
- *Social Media Memo

WEEK FIFTEEN (April 17 & 19)

- Mobile and Social Media In Your Career
- Landing a Job with a Newsroom's Mobile and Social Team

WEEK SIXTEEN (April 24 & 26)

- Scams and Disinformation project launch

WEEK SEVENTEEN (May 1)

- Course Wrap-Up
- Scams and Disinformation project launch