Syracuse University | Newhouse School
JNL 461 Mobile and Social Media Journalism – Fall 2025

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course 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. (3 Credits)

COURSE OVERVIEW

TikTok. Instagram. X. 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.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Collaborate as a news team to contribute original reporting to NCC News and to manage its social media accounts.
- Effectively use social media for newsgathering, distribution, and audience engagement—with a focus on presenting meaningful information that fits each platforms aesthetic.
- Produce multimedia web stories with a focus on how news consumers are engaging with content on websites and social media.

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- Research and locate reliable information from social media to enhance your reporting, and at the same time, identify misleading and unbalanced content.
- Demonstrate the technical skills of mobile newsgathering through the use of mobile devices and apps to gather, produce, and distribute news content.
- Engage with and actively participate in the online community of the beat that you have chosen.
- Create and enhance your own professional brand on social media platforms.
- Identify the ethical dilemmas involved with journalists' use of social media.
- Use analytics platforms to monitor and analyze social media engagement and success.

REQUIRED READINGS & MATERIALS

- Adornato, A. (2021). *Mobile and Social Media Journalism: A Practical Guide for Multimedia Journalism* (2 ed.). Routledge.
- Mobile Journalism Kit: You will be able to reserve one through the CAGE.
- 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 X handles, website links, and links for you to subscribe to e-newsletters.

    Poynter: https://twitter.com/Poynter and Poynter Newsletter https://www.poynter.org/newsletters

    Pew Research Center: https://twitter.com/pewjournalism and Pew Research Newsletter https://www.pewresearch.org/about/follow-us

    Nieman Lab: https://twitter.com/NiemanLab and Nieman Newsletter https://www.niemanlab.org/subscribe/

    NPR Training: training.npr.org

    BBC Academy https://www.twitter.com/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 OrangeSUccess 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 OrangeSUccess 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:

    o **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.

o **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 students' grade.

o **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 Education 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*.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POLICIES

As a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University considers academic integrity at the forefront of learning, serving as a core value and guiding pillar of education. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy provides students with the necessary guidelines to complete academic work with integrity throughout their studies. Students are required to uphold both course-specific and university-wide academic integrity expectations such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting academic integrity. The full Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy can be found by visiting class.syr.edu, selecting, "Academic Integrity," and "Expectations and Policy."

Upholding Academic Integrity includes the protection of faculty's intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share instructors' course materials, including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others, which are then presented as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online.

Students found in violation of the policy 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. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

Artificial Intelligence

Syracuse's academic integrity expectations extend to the fast-growing realm of artificial intelligence (AI) and represent the importance of understanding, exploring, and evaluating emerging technologies.

Artificial Intelligence cases may not be submitted to the Center for Learning and Student Success with AI-detection results as the only evidence of an Academic Integrity Violation.

Consider all course assignments and learning outcomes before choosing between the three artificial intelligence policies below for inclusion in your syllabus. Using and exploring artificial intelligence is an important aspect of understanding, exploring, and evaluating emerging technologies. Providing students scaffolded opportunities to use these tools, when possible, promotes information literacy, self-directed inquiry, and future career professionalism. If possible, provide opportunities for students to explore and practice with AI. Cases that involve suspected academic integrity violations for inappropriate use of artificial intelligence will not be investigated unless the course syllabus contains one of the three artificial intelligence statements provided below. Faculty may not write their own artificial intelligence statement or reference language from any option they did not choose.

Some Artificial intelligence use: Based on the specific learning outcomes and assignments in this course, artificial intelligence should only be used for experimentation purposes, when instructed by the faculty member. See each assignment, quiz, or exam instructions for more information about what artificial intelligence tools are permitted and to what extent, as well as citation requirements. If no instructions are provided for a specific assignment, then no use of any artificial intelligence tool is permitted. Any AI use beyond that which is detailed in course assignments is explicitly prohibited except when documented permission is granted.

Newhouse Journalism Generative AI and Large Language Model (LLM) Policy

We've entered a transformative phase in the communications fields where free tools exist that can create relatively complex writing without much effort.

Many news organizations have recently begun articulating their opinion on the ethical and appropriate use of generative AI systems, like ChatGPT or Claude 2, in journalistic work. It boils down to this: Generative AI can be acceptable to use when it's helping you do something or understand something. Generative AI is not acceptable to use when it's doing the work for you.

Examples of ethical and responsible use: You might use ChatGPT to suggest some

potential headlines for a story you've written, which you then adapt for publication; you might have it help you summarize or organize salient information from a lengthy public document; or you might have it jog your memory about whether a month name is spelled out or abbreviated under AP style rules.

Examples of inappropriate use: You use a generative AI system to produce portions of a story; you use it to rewrite or edit your own writing in a substantive way.

Because of how these AI systems work to generate language, they make things up. They get things wrong. They cannot be trusted to produce anything reliable or factual. Even when using these systems in an appropriate fashion, you still must verify what they have produced is accurate.

A central journalism value is transparency; any time you use a generative AI system to assist you with an assignment, you're required to disclose it to me and explain how it was used. Failure to do so will be considered an academic integrity violation.

Newhouse Journalism Fabrication, Plagiarism and Other Breaches of Professional Standards
Fabrication and plagiarism are the gravest sins in journalism; they will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Instances of either will result in an academic integrity case; these are considered "Level 3" offenses under the university's academic integrity rubric (https://class.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Academic-Integrity-Policy-Violation-and-Sanction-Classification-Rubric-Updated-081018.pdf) because they represent an extreme breach of acceptable journalistic conduct. "Level 3" offenses can result in suspension or expulsion. You will also fail the class.

Examples of fabrication: Making up sources and information for a story (or having a generative AI system do it for you); generating quotes that were never spoken or written by a human source; misrepresenting a source as another person who you didn't interview; etc.

Examples of plagiarism: Copying language, passages and quotations from other works verbatim without proper attribution; including a substantial amount of writing created by a generative AI system in your work; etc. It's also considered plagiarism when you recycle stories that you've already used for another course or previously published in a news outlet like The Daily Orange.

If you have any questions about how to properly attribute information in your stories, see me. Beyond that, you're required to abide by the principles set forth in the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics where applicable: https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp.

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

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 must 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 must be accurate and spelled correctly.

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MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

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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 (35% 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.

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 (30% 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 (reposts, replies, and @ mentions) and use hashtags associated with your beat. 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/Reporter's Notebook (20% of grade): During most weeks that stories are not due, you will complete two blog posts (approx. 400 words each). Most of the posts will be related to your beat, but sometimes you will have to address a specific question

related to social media. The goal is to develop your own blog voice and thoughtful discussions.

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.

Teaching Moment (5% of grade): This is your opportunity to teach us. In teams of 2 or 3, you will lead a 20-minute class presentation/discussion about a current topic related to mobile and social media journalism. Weekly course readings and content from professional journalism groups (such as Poynter and Nieman) will provide you with potential ideas. Topics might include how a news outlet uses social media, an ethical issue related to social media and journalism, or ideas on how journalists could use a particular mobile or social media tool.

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 or 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	Topic	Assignments (typically due by beginning of class the following week) Check class website for to-do lists
1 Aug. 26 & 28	• 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	**Weekly To-Do List**
2 Sept. 2 & 4	• Finding a Niche/Beat Continued • Social Media Audit • Personal Website and NCC News Set-up • Introduction to Blogging	**Weekly To-Do List** **Two blog posts due next week**
3 Sept. 9 & 11	• Navigating Change: The Mobile-First Newsroom Revisited • Writing and Video Fundamentals • The Mobile Journalist and Must-have Apps	**Weekly To-Do List** **Three story pitches due next week**
4 Sept. 16 & 18	• 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	**Weekly To-Do List** **Package #1 due next Thursday**
5 Sept. 23 & 25	• Writing Mobile-Friendly Web Stories • Artificial Intelligence • Publishing to NCC News • Package #1 due Thursday	**Weekly To-Do List** **Three story pitches and two blog posts due next week**
6 Sept. 30 & Oct.	• Review Stories and Story Pitches • Writing Check-up • Social Video and Social Graphics • Your Beat Tips on Social Media	**Weekly To-Do List** **Package #2 due next Thursday**
7 Oct. 7 & 9	• Audience Analytics • Using Mobile Devices and Social Media During Live Events/Breaking News • Emerging Forms of News Engagement • Package #2 due Thursday	**Weekly To-Do List** **Three story pitches and two blog posts due next week**

Week	Topic	Assignments (typically due by beginning of class the following week) Check class website for to-do lists
8 **Oct. 16**	• Review Stories and Story Pitches • Social Media Policies, Ethics and Diversity • Verification and Authenticity of Information • Source communication via encrypted messaging apps • Location, Location, Location: Geo-location Sleuthing	**Weekly To-Do List** **Package #3 due next Thursday**
9 **Oct. 21 & 23**	• Fake News: The Spread of Misinformation and Disinformation • Social Media Analytics Revisited • Package #3 due Thursday	**Weekly To-Do List** **Three story pitches and two blog posts due next week**
10 **Oct. 28 & 30**	• Review Stories and Story Pitches • Mobile and Social Media Jobs in Newsrooms	**Weekly To-Do List** **Package #4 due next Thursday**
11 **Nov. 4 & 6**	• Guest Speaker • Package #4 due Thursday	**Weekly To-Do List** **Three story pitches and two blog posts due next week**
12 **Nov. 11 & 13**	• Review Stories • Guest Speaker • Discussion of your social media brand and analytics	**Weekly To-Do List** **Package #5 due next Thursday**
13 **Nov. 18 & 20**	• Website check-up • Discussion of your social media brand and analytics • Package #5 due Thursday	**Weekly To-Do List**
14 **Dec. 2 & 4**	• Mobile and Social Media In Your Career • Landing a Job with a Newsroom's Mobile and Social Team	**Weekly To-Do List**
15 **Dec. 9**	• Course Wrap-Up, Reflections, and Evals	