Social Media Writing
STRM 3210-001
Spring 2026

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Catalog Description

Development of strategic writing skills to write effectively across various social media platforms with an emphasis on the need to tailor the message to both the audience and the platform through which it is communicated. Topics explored include style, repurposing of content, specific requirements for various platforms, organizational voice, SEO and strategic message development.

Prerequisites

None

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

- Freberg, K. (2026). *Social Media for Strategic Communication* (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN: 978-1-936733
- Access to personal social media accounts and analytics.
- Other resources will be assigned and posted on Canvas.

Class Format

This class meets in person twice a week. Information is presented through lectures, multimedia, writing workshops, and group activities both in class and utilizing online platforms. Regular attendance and participation are expected and will affect your grade. We will complete some exercises and activities in class that are pertinent to learning the material. These exercises and activities cannot be "made up." If you miss that class, you will miss the exercises and activities. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to communicate with classmates and me about missed information and questions about assignments.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis Canvas login page:
   https://memphis.instructure.com
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. On the Dashboard, click on the course card for STRM 3213-001 Social Media Writing.

Class discussions, as well as any written assignments, online or in-person, should remain professional and show respect to all people regardless of background, sex, race, age, or any other factor. Disrespectful or hateful speech will not be tolerated in my classroom, and I reserve

the right to ask any student to leave if they violate this policy. Public relations and strategic communications are about creating and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships. Our classroom is no different.

PROFESSIONAL WRITING STANDARDS AND AI USE

In this course, you are learning to write strategically, clearly, and ethically for audiences across digital and social media spaces. Your work must meet professional expectations for accuracy, timeliness, respect for the audience, proper attribution, and appropriate style and formatting.

Writing practice comes first

You must do your own writing. You may not use generative AI (ChatGPT, Claude, Co-Pilot, Gemini, Canva "Magic Write," etc.) for coursework unless an assignment explicitly tells you to use it. If AI use is not assigned, using it to generate, rewrite, summarize, or otherwise "fix" your work counts as unauthorized assistance and will be reflected in your grade.

Examples:
Do not ask AI to write or rewrite your blog post, caption, or reflection.
Do not paste your assignment into an AI tool and submit its revision as your own work.
Do use an in-app "generate caption" or "rewrite post" feature and submit it as your own work.

What is ok:
Using spell check and basic grammar tools (e.g., Word, basic Grammarly)
Using built-in tools to catch typos, subject-verb agreement, or simple punctuation errors.

Another way to look at it: Using Grammarly or Microsoft Word to check your spelling and grammar is acceptable. Using Grammarly's new generative AI feature or Microsoft Co-Pilot to rewrite your entire assignment is not.

When AI use is assigned

At times, we will practice how professionals use AI tools in social media and strategic communication workflows (e.g., brainstorming content ideas, drafting caption variations, audience segmentation, A/B testing). When AI is assigned:

- You must treat AI output as unverified. It can sound confident and still be wrong, biased, or off-brand.
- You are responsible for the final product, including accuracy, tone/voice, accessibility, and ethics.
- You must complete an "AI Use & Verification Appendix" for the assignment, using the template provided on Canvas.

If we use AI to support visuals (e.g., generating example images for a mock campaign or infographics), you must also follow industry-standard ethical, copyright, and disclosure guidelines.

Bottom line

Learning to write means practicing the full process yourself. If AI use isn't specifically assigned, don't use it. If it *is* assigned, use it transparently and verify everything.

This class is about building *your* voice and professional judgment as a social media writer. AI can be a useful assistant, but it cannot replace your thinking, ethics, or creativity.

LATE WORK AND FLEXIBILITY POLICY

Assignments are due on the posted deadline to keep our class activities, feedback, and skill-building on track. That said, I know that life happens. If you anticipate a situation that may affect your ability to meet deadlines, contact me as early as possible so we can discuss options. Late work is accepted up to 3 days (72 hours) after the deadline, with a 10% penalty per day. After three days, the assignment earns no credit. In class writing workshops, assignments, and other activities cannot be made up for any reason; absence means you miss those points and the practice.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND AUTHORSHIP

You should submit work that reflects your own thinking, judgment, and writing, and give appropriate credit when you draw on outside sources. Any use of generative AI must follow the course policy: when AI is prescribed, you are responsible for the final product, including accuracy, sourcing, and voice alignment. Misrepresenting AI-generated or copied text as your own, submitting fabricated citations or evidence, or using AI to produce work you cannot explain and defend violates academic integrity and professional standards. When in doubt, cite, disclose, or ask.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

This is a general guideline for assignments. More details will be provided on Canvas. All work should be turned in as a Word document via Canvas by the deadline specified in the assignment, unless otherwise noted. Please be sure to read all assignments and prompts thoroughly and respond to all parts of the assignments. It is common for assignments to have more than one element.

Blog posts. We will use Canvas's discussion board for these assignments. Blogs and short-form writing are a well-established form of digital and social media. Blog content is often posted on LinkedIn or growing platforms like Substack and shared across other social media channels. Most weeks, you will compose a 250- to 300-word discussion post in a blog format. These posts will help you practice your writing skills, stay current with industry trends, and critically reflect on course topics. Format details and prompts are provided on Canvas.

Quizzes. You will take quizzes throughout the semester to test your understanding of course concepts. Quizzes are delivered via Canvas with a 45-minute time limit. You have two attempts at each quiz. Your highest score will count as your grade. You are welcome to use your notes on the quiz, but working with another student is prohibited.

Individual assignments. These independent assignments will allow you to demonstrate understanding of course concepts and reinforce information from readings, lectures, and presentations.

In-class activities. To reinforce learning outcomes and reduce the burden of out-of-class work, you will have several in-class activities and discussions. These activities will often be scheduled in

advance, though a graded in-class activity may occur without advance notice. You must be present and participate in these activities to receive a grade for them. Bonus point opportunities will be available throughout the semester that can help you if you must miss a class, but please note that you will not be permitted to complete an in-class activity if you are absent from class that day, regardless of the reason. This is not a punishment. It is simply not possible for you to "make up" the activity based on what we will be doing. Attending class regularly is the best way to ensure success in this class.

Social media platform teach-back + mini writing lab. This assignment will help you analyze and understand "traditional" and emerging social media platforms, how they operate, and why they are critical tools for PR and social media professionals. You will select a platform from a list of options and explore the platform's role in community building, audience engagement, and brand strategy. You will give your peers a high-level, practical overview in a 7-min. in-class presentation and then lead the class in a short, guided exercise to rewrite content to fit your platform. Details are provided on Canvas.

Team assignment: social media strategy. This project brings together the work you've completed individually and as a team over the course of the semester. In teams, you will create a social media strategy for an approved organization, including a 2-week content calendar and mock-ups for all posts, both original and curated. Your team will present the strategy in class. Details are provided on Canvas.

Grading
- Blog posts, 15%
- Quizzes, 10%
- Individual assignments, 25%
- In-class activities, 10%
- Social media platform presentation, 15%
- Team assignment: social media strategy, 25%

CONTACTING ME
The best and quickest way to contact me is via email (ksmarks@memphis.edu). I will respond to your email within 24 – 48 hours. You can also visit my office hours or schedule an in-person or Teams meeting. If you have a problem, do not let it snowball. Contact me ASAP.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE
This schedule is subject to change. Any updates will be provided via email and Canvas announcements.

On the date a chapter is indicated, you should come to class having read the chapter and any resources posted on Canvas and be ready to actively engage in discussion.

Week 1, Jan. 19 – 25: Welcome to Social Media Writing
Monday, Jan. 19 – No Class (MLK Day)
Wednesday, Jan. 21 – Course introduction – read CH1 + Canvas resources
Assignments:
- Syllabus quiz – due Sunday, Jan. 25

- Social media platform teach-back + mini writing lab – various due dates

Week 2, Jan. 26 – Feb. 1: Doing what's right
Monday, Jan. 26 – Writing lab | Ethical & legal considerations – read CH 2 + Canvas resources
Wednesday, Jan. 28 – DEI(B) and accessibility considerations – read CH 4 + Canvas resources
Assignments:
- Blog – due on Saturday, Jan. 31
- CH 1 Quiz – due on Sunday, Feb. 1

Week 3, Feb. 2 – 8: Who are you?
Monday, Feb. 2 – Blog lab | Teams & organization selection
Wednesday, Feb. 4 – Personal branding + early career positioning – read CH 3 & CH 5 + Canvas resources. In-class activity: Personal Brand Audit (PB1) – due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday night.
Assignments:
- Blog: Personal brand audit reflection – due on Saturday, Feb. 7
- CH 2 & CH 4 Quiz – due on Sunday, Feb. 8

Week 4, Feb. 9 – 15: How do we listen to the conversation *about* us?
Monday, Feb. 9 – Writing lab + begin PB2
Wednesday, Feb. 11 –
- Social media platform teach-back + mini writing lab: TBD
- Research – read CH 6 + Canvas resources
Assignments:
- PB2 – due on Saturday, Feb. 14
- CH 3 & CH 5 Quiz – due on Sunday, Feb. 15

Week 5, Feb. 16 – 22: Third-party credibility
Monday, Feb. 16 –
- Social media platform teach-back + mini writing lab:TBD
- Sprout Social Walk-thru – review Canvas resources
Wednesday, Feb. 18 – Influencers & the creator economy – read CH 8 + Canvas resources
Assignments:
- Influencer assignment – due on Sunday, Feb. 22
- CH 6 Quiz – due on Sunday, Feb. 22
- Team assignment – Social Media Audit – due on Saturday, Feb. 28

Week 6, Feb. 23 – March 1: How do we talk with people
NOTE: *This will be an asynchronous week. I'm out of town at a social media conference. NO in-person class meeting on Monday or Wednesday. Content and assignments will be posted on Canvas.*
Assignments:
- Read CH 10
- Blog: Voice & Tone – due on Saturday, Feb. 28
- CH 8 Quiz – due on Sunday, March 1
- *Reminder:* Team Social Media Audit is due on Saturday, Feb. 28

Week 7, March 2 – 8: A picture or video is worth a thousand words

Monday, March 2 –
- <mark>Social media platform teach-back + mini writing lab: TBD</mark>
- Blog lab | Voice/tone of team organizations

Wednesday, March 4 – Visual storytelling + captions – review CH 10 + read CH 11 + Canvas resources

Assignments:
- Short-form video assignment – due on Saturday, March 7
- CH 10 Quiz – due on Sunday, March 8
- PB3 – due on Saturday, April 4

<mark>Week 8, March 9 – 15</mark>: Spring Break
No Classes

<mark>Week 9, March 16 – 22</mark>: How do we keep the dialogue going?
Monday, March 16 –
- <mark>Social media platform teach-back + mini writing lab - TBD</mark>
- Writing lab (dust off the cobwebs)

Wednesday, March 18 – Conversations & community – review CH 11 + Canvas resources

Assignments:
- Comment thread analysis & rewrite assignment – due on Saturday, March 21
- CH 11 Quiz – due on Sunday, March 22
- *Individual* assignment – Audience analysis of team organizations – due on Saturday, March 28

<mark>Week 10, March 23 – 29</mark>: What do we do when the conversation gets hard?
Monday, March 23 – Crisis & issues content – read CH 12 + Canvas resources
Wednesday, March 25 – Crisis lab

Assignments:
- *Reminder: Individual* audience analysis is due on Saturday, March 28

<mark>Week 11, March 30 – April 5</mark>: How do we know if we are successful?
Monday, March 30 – Measurement + A/B testing – read CH 13 + Canvas resources
Wednesday, April 1 –
- <mark>Social media platform teach-back + mini writing lab: TBD</mark>
- Writing lab

Activities & Assignments:
- *Reminder*: PB3 is due on Saturday, April 4
- CH 12 Quiz due on Sunday, April 5

<mark>Week 12, April 6 – 12</mark>: How do we put it all together?
Monday, April 6 –
- <mark>Social media platform teach-back + mini writing lab: TBD</mark>
- Strategic planning – read CH 7 + Canvas resources

Wednesday, April 8 –
- <mark>Social media platform teach-back + mini writing lab: TBD</mark>
- Applied social media writing – read CH 14

Assignments:

- *Individual* assignment – Objectives for team organizations – due on Saturday, April 11
- CH 13 Quiz – due on Sunday, April 12

<mark>Week 13, April 13 – 19</mark>: Social Media Strategy Team Sprint 1
Monday, April 13 – Team sprint: objectives + KPIs + content pillars/messages
Wednesday, April 15 – Team sprint: content calendars + content creation
Assignment: CH 7 & CH 14 Quiz – due on Sunday, April 19

<mark>Week 14, April 20 – 26</mark>: Social Media Strategy Team Sprint 2
Monday, April 20 – Team sprint: post creation, editing
Wednesday, April 22 – Finalize social media strategy – due at the end of class

<mark>Week 15, April 27 – 29</mark>: Presenting the team strategies
Monday, April 27 – Team sprint: presentations – due on Tuesday, April 28
Wednesday – Team presentations
Assignments
- PB4 – due on Saturday, May 2
- Final blog: How my social media writing evolved this semester – due on Saturday, May 2

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES
Professional Values and Competencies in STRM 3213
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences, and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, and fairness.
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style, and grammatical correctness.
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

How professional values and competencies will be met
Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)
- Provide a conceptual overview and a systematic study of content creation, curation , and management.
- Understand the importance of considering diversity, accessibility, and inclusiveness when planning social media campaigns and messaging.
- Interpret and apply principles of leadership to the special needs of social media managers and content creators.

- Foster professionalism in social media management, covering the knowledge base, theory, methodologies, and ethics.

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)
- Select and apply appropriate research and project management tools in support of social media content creation, curation, and management.
- Evaluate and critique social media campaigns and content.
- Plan and create content for a social media campaign.
- Work effectively in a group.

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness
- Learn about the important role of social media management and content creation in public relations.

Understanding
- Understand leadership management and the role social media writing and management play in public relations practice.
- Learn the basics of social media campaign finance and budget management.
- Understand the different audiences found on various social media platforms and how to select an appropriate platform mix for a social media campaign to further an organization's goals.
- Study effective social media campaigns and messaging.

Application
- Network with professionals in public relations and the community.
- Improve written and oral communication skills through written briefs, assessments, presentations, and reports.
- Complete research, planning, and content creation for a social media campaign.
- Gain experience creating effective social media messages.
- Learn about your personal leadership style and identify areas for growth.