

New York University / Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute

Professor Kenneth Paulsen

Summer 2021: SS0: JOUR-UA 25, REPORTING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Mondays & Wednesdays, 6:30–9:20 p.m., 20 Cooper Square, Room 659

To contact professor: kjp2007@nyu.edu; home;; cell:

Office hours: 5:30–6:30 p.m. Mondays

but also before and after any

class, plus by phone/appointment

Course description

Social media serves as an essential tool not only for how today's reporters research and report the news, but also how they present and promote the news. It represents a massive shift over the course of just 10–15 years. In this course, we'll learn to track down high-quality primary sources through social channels and engage with them; conduct geographically focused research; and craft news reports that meet the interests of social-media obsessed audience, while also serving the public-interest objectives of serious news outlets. We'll write traditional stories using information and sources from social media' and we'll apply non-traditional storytelling techniques such as Snapchat and Instagram Stories to deliver the news.

We'll study social media habits across age spectrums, including how authors build personal readerships, how stories go viral, and the overwhelmingly mobile audience that is reshaping how news is being consumed. We'll follow the data, exploring insights from the social media analytics and scheduling platforms, while remaining true to the ethics and tenets of high-quality journalism.

Learning objectives

- Identify strong, reliable sources of information on social media channels and cultivate relationships the lead to strong journalistic reporting.
- Demonstrate awareness of how factual information is disseminated on social media, and understand how misinformation can spread.
- Prepare journalistic reports using a variety of non-traditional approaches, including "live" reporting, social information cards, threads, and Instagram/Snapchat stories.
- Build skills to present clear, accurate breaking news reports on the spot.
- Harness the reach of social media channels to build diversity in news reporting.

Course structure

- Class sessions will include instruction on using different social media platforms these unique journalistic purposes; writing, research and live reporting drills; and intensive planning/review of weekly assignments. We'll regularly discuss the news of the day – how it's handled on social media, what we can learn from it, and how we can build on it. Ethics will be woven into each class session.

Readings/Viewings

- The New York Times, Monday–Friday only. Print OR Digital: [nytimes.com/college](https://www.nytimes.com/college)
- Selected social media accounts to be noted in class

Social requirements

- Students enrolled in the course are required to have public-facing Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat accounts. A Facebook account is also required; a number of options are available to ensure your content can be shared, including your account settings and creating a separate page for your journalism.

Course requirements

- **Attendance:** Your attendance is critical, not only to understanding the course content but to showing your commitment to the material and engaging with your classmates. There is no substitute for that. Due to the intense nature of the class and limited time we have together, no undocumented absences will be permitted. Discuss challenges with me well ahead of time.
- **Engagement:** Participation is not formally graded but it is a critical factor in your success. You're expected to engage in every class discussion, just as a news reporter or assignment editor would be expected to engage in a news meeting.
- **Punctuality:** Assignments must be completed and turned in on time, down to the minute. There will be a minimum full-letter grade deduction for any late assignment, escalating with subsequent late submissions.
- **Commitment to success:** Failure to complete any assignment will result in a failing grade for the course. Incompletes will not be given.

Strategies for success

Assignments will be thoroughly explained and discussed in class.

- Class time is centered around instruction, practice + strategies to tackle each week's assignment. Be prepared to explain your approach to your assignments with your classmates, to offer suggestions and insights, and to review constructive criticism.
- Guided writing drills will take place regularly. Some assignments will allow for guided research time in class. You will occasionally be asked to complete an in-class assignment on your own time.
- Be creative. Take responsible risks. Embrace personal journalism by showcasing the humanity of sources you explore in detail.
- Be open to criticism. It will always be fair and respectful, and with your growth potential foremost in mind. You are expected to make mistakes – big ones sometimes. How will you learn from those inevitable flubs?
- Be flexible. Minor changes to the syllabus are possible. Why? Your needs, your personalities, the evolving response to the pandemic, and news stories of the day.
- Follow instructions and **ask questions when you are unclear about anything.**

***In addition to my office hours, I am happy to discuss any issue by appointment, by phone, or through e-mail. Text or call my cellphone if it's pressing: _____. Although assignments will be explained in class, you are welcome to ask for clarification. I am happy to help you. Please do not call later than 10 p.m. regarding classwork. **However: If you have a personal emergency, you may contact me at any hour of the day or night.**

Grading:

- Major weekly writing assignments: 55 percent (15–20–20)
- Midweek assignments 15 percent (5–10)
- Final report 30 percent
- Journalism majors: It is the Journalism Institute's policy that a grade of "C" or better is needed for the course to count toward your major.
- Plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" and possible expulsion from the university. We will discuss plagiarism in class, but it is your responsibility from Day 1 to know what plagiarism is, and to avoid it at all costs. If you are ever in doubt, do not submit a questionable assignment — hold it back until you get clarification.

Grading will conform to the Journalism Institute's policy:

- A = Work at a high professional level (publishable in a serious publication, even if the work is unpublished). Excellent attendance. (No unexcused absences). Active class participation. Great attitude. Student has demonstrably challenged him/herself over the course of the term, even if he or she has come into the course with appreciable skill. Exceeds course objectives.
- A-minus (90–95): Work at a nearly (high) publishable level in a heavily edited publication. Remarkable progress over the term. Excellent attendance. (No unexcused absence.) Active class participation. Student has demonstrably challenged him/herself over the course of the term. Mastery of course objectives.
- B-plus (87–89): Notable progress over the term. Excellent attendance (no unexcused absence). Active class participation. Work is nearing a high publishable standard. Mastery of course objectives.
- B (85–87): Good progress over the term. Excellent attendance. Active class participation. Steady improvement in written assignments, assimilating the lessons of the course. Meets course objectives.
- B-minus (80–84): Acceptable progress over the term but exhibits the beginnings of mastery and could continue to progress. Excellent attendance and class participation. No more than one unexcused absence. Has strived to meet course objectives and has succeeded to an acceptable extent.
- C-plus (77–79): Adequate progress over the term. Work is acceptable but not of a superior quality. Excellent attendance, assignment completion and class participation. No more than one unexcused absence. Despite considerable effort, course objectives are unmet.

- C (75–77): Halting but noticeable progress over the term. Work is acceptable, but in no way distinguished. Attendance, assignment completion and class participation are good. Effort has been uninspired and course objectives are not met.
- C-minus (70–74): No noticeable progress over the term. Work is acceptable but in no way distinguished. Attendance, assignment completion and class participation are good. No more than one absence. Course objectives unmet.
- D: (68–69) No progress. Missing assignments. Poor participation. Good attendance. Course objectives unmet.
- F: (67 and below) No progress. Unacceptable work. Missing assignments. Poor attendance and participation. Course objectives unmet.

Accommodations

- Students with disabilities that necessitate accommodations should contact and register with New York University's Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at 212–998–4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

Diversity & Inclusion

- The Institute is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. The Institute embraces a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions.

Note: Expect to cover all of these topics below, but the overall plan, including assignments, is still being finalized in spring 2021, and will certainly change.

Week of	Topic	Assignment for the week [due by email by 6 p.m. the following Sunday unless otherwise stated]
6/7	Intros. Mining social media to connect with high-quality, diverse sources. Crafting basic, trustworthy news reports based on information sourced from social media. Curating Twitter lists.	Preliminary assignment TBA due midweek. Also: A report on a developing story, capturing primary source information and reactions from multiple social media sources, including at least 2 interviews from new social sources.
6/14	Learning from each other. Relating the news through Snapchat and Instagram stories. Using technology to find exactly the sources you're looking for. Getting hyperlocal. Social media analytics and the social audience.	Reporting from 1,000 miles away: A detailed report on a specific situation in an unfamiliar locale – outdoor dining in San Antonio or coronavirus challenges in Salt Lake City-- including photos, videos and a diversity of sources. With a 15-slide Instagram Story.
6/21	Breaking news: Using social media to get the story out quickly, accurately, and creatively. Crafting social media information cards. Secrets of successful Twitter threads.	Facebook Live assignment TBA, due midweek. Also: Your connection: A report based on connecting through social media with individual with some claim to fame.
6/28	Putting it all together: Characteristics of the strongest social content. Promoting content via social media. Getting your audience to care about topics that tend to tank on social. Why do some stories go viral?	A comprehensive multi-platform report on a community topic of social media interest.