

New York University / Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute

Prof. Kenneth Paulsen

Summer 2024: SEARCH AND SOCIAL MEDIA SKILLS FOR JOURNALISTS

Mondays & Wednesdays*, 6:20–9:20 p.m.

Juneteenth holiday week scheduling to be discussed

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

Office hours: after class every night, but also before
any class plus by phone/appointment

Course overview

Search and social media have transformed how readers get their news — and how reporters manage every aspect of their jobs. This course aims to build the specialized skills needed to connect with those readers, who can account for the majority of some news sites' readers. We'll cover the following:

- Understanding SEO basics: How the wording of a headline can make the difference between success or failure of a post. Deciphering the strategy behind crafting multiple headlines for a single story. Why the night of the Super Bowl you should be writing about next year's big game. Understanding traditional Google Search and also Google Discover — the platform that serves the content you didn't know you were looking for, with pinpoint accuracy.
- Researching with social media: How journalists use social media to find ideas, track down sources, research and verify information.
- Reporting with social media: How journalists can bypass traditional routes and reach the masses through creative, aggressive news reporting on social media.
- Assignments: Instagram storytelling, through photos, video, on-camera reporting and interviewing; developing search strategies to meet audience curiosity around major trends and events; crafting fact, data and quote cards, to creatively engage users on social media; creating useful TikTok videos that will have evergreen appeal to readers seeking to learn more about a topic or place.
- Speakers: Past speakers in the social media-focused class include decision-makers and influential voices: NY1 education reporter with large X/Twitter presence; Food Network personality; the voice behind the "Decoding Fox News" X/Twitter account; CNN social producer; Denver Broncos social media specialist; author of "The Inside Story of Instagram." We'll add to these kinds of experts with leaders from the search world.

Learning objectives

- Identify strong, reliable sources of information on social media channels and cultivate relationships that 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 video-based live storytelling.
- 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.
 - Understand how Google has transformed the news media’s approach to journalism.
 - Strategize around SEO (search-engine optimization), from the topics you choose, to the headlines, photos and language used in an article.
 - Grasp the basic economics and tensions between search/social and the news media.

Course structure

- Class sessions will include:
 - Instruction on using different social media platforms for journalistic purposes
 - Analysis and review of the Google-news media relationship
 - Writing, research and live reporting drills
 - Intensive planning/review of assignments.
- We’ll also discuss the news of the day – how it’s handled on search platforms and social media, what we can learn from it, and how we can build on it.
- Ethical considerations, including the use of AI, will be woven into class sessions.
- We will regularly discuss how these platforms can help us to showcase a greater diversity of people, voices, and topics in our coverage.

Readings/Viewings

- The New York Times. [nytimes.com/college](https://www.nytimes.com/college)
- Selected social media accounts to be noted in class

Social requirements

- **Students are required to have public-facing X/Twitter, Instagram and TikTok accounts, to connect with each other on these platforms, and to review each other’s work.**

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.

***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.**

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.

Grading:

- 3 major weekly assignments: 55 percent (15-20-20)
- Midweek/in-class assignments (2-3) 20 percent
- Final report 25 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.

Note: Due to the short timeframe and need to adapt to the unique class personality and news developments, we may switch the plan for some weeks.

<i>Week of</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Major Assignments [due 6 p.m. the following Sunday]</i>
6/3	<p>Intros. Why start with X/Twitter? Can Instagram Threads compete? Curating X/Twitter lists. How reporters cultivate followings on the platform.</p> <p>Basic reporting for the X/Twitter audience. Crafting social media quote and data cards.</p>	<p>Due 6/9: X/Twitter Thread based on a local weekend event, including words, photos and video</p>
6/10	<p>Creative social media storytelling through Instagram stories.</p> <p>The search audience: How do you know what they're looking for, and how to meet those needs? Useful sources of information about search.</p>	<p>Midweek assignment: Story on an NYC transportation or quality-of-life topic</p> <p>Due 6/16: Instagram Story exploring a topic with a rich history in NYC</p>
6/17	<p>Crafting search-engine-optimization strategies that deliver eyeballs.</p> <p>Mining social media platforms to connect with high-quality, diverse sources.</p> <p>Why TikTok journalism is big business.</p>	<p>Midweek assignment: Search-engine-optimization (SEO) strategy plan for summer Olympics or presidential race.</p> <p>Due 6/23: TikTok report, with evergreen appeal, on an NYC food or cultural spot.</p>
6/24	<p>Google Discover: Tapping into this vast audience opportunity.</p> <p>Showcasing your personality in your reports: Using social platforms to connect with your audience.</p> <p>Facebook reactions: What prompts readers to register specific reactions – like, love, sad, ha-ha.</p> <p>Student-led discussion of final reports.</p>	<p>Midweek assignment: TikTok explainer or TBA</p> <p>Final report due 6/27: An in-depth multi-platform report on a community topic of social media interest, combined with a written report aligned with SEO considerations.</p>