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 week: We meet Tuesday 6/18 instead of Wednesday 6/19)

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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 a majority of readership for some news sites. 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, and 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 platforms.
- Expanding your definition of news.
- 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."

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, and how their varied platforms draw billions of eyeballs.
- 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:
  - Guidance on using different social media platforms for journalistic purposes
  - Analysis and review of the Google-news media relationship
  - Research and live reporting drills
  - Guest speaker time and preparation.
  - Intensive planning/review of assignments.
- The class will often run like a news meeting. There's a formality to our class, for sure, but your voices and experiences are part of everyone's growth.
- 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
- Selected readings as ID'd in class.
- Selected social media accounts to be noted in class

Social requirements
- Students are required to share X/Twitter, Instagram + Threads and TikTok accounts with classmates and the instructor. A public account on at least one platform is strongly encouraged. Review each other's work after We , 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, <u>down to the minute</u>. 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. <u>I am happy to help you.</u> Please do not call later than 10 p.m. regarding classwork. **<u>However: If you have a personal emergency, you may contact me at any hour of the day or night</u>.**

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.
- <u>Plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" and possible expulsion from the university</u>. We will discuss plagiarism in class, but <u>it is your responsibility from Day 1 to know what plagiarism is, and to avoid it at all costs</u>. <u>If you are ever in doubt, **do not submit a questionable assignment**</u> — <u>hold it back until you get clarification</u>.

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.

Week of	Topic	Major Assignments [due 5 p.m. the following Sunday]
6/3	**Intros. Why start with X/Twitter? Can Instagram Threads compete? Curating X/Twitter lists.** **Basic reporting for the X/Twitter audience. Crafting social media quote and data cards.** **Interviewing for your social media reports.** **Guest Speaker (Wed.): Jennifer Gay, the personality behind the wildly popular "All the Vegas" sites for TikTok, Instagram and Twitter. (3 million+ followers)**	**Due 6/9: Using X/Twitter or Instagram Threads, craft a thread of 9-12 posts based on a local weekend event, including factual reporting, words, photos, video and a quote card.** **Read/watch before 6/9: Event Recap: The Future of Search in the Age of AI**
6/10	**Creative social media storytelling through Instagram stories.** **Reporting the news based on social media posts.** **The search audience: How do you know what readers are looking for, and how to meet those needs efficiently? Useful sources of information about search, starting with Google Trends.**	**Midweek assignment: Instagram Story TBA** **Due 6/16: Instagram Story exploring a topic with a rich history in NYC.**
6/17	**Google Discover: Tapping into this vast audience opportunity.** **Mining social media platforms to connect with high-quality, diverse sources.** **Finding the Sweet Spot on TikTok. What do the strongest TikToks have in common?** **Guest Speaker: Zeve Sanderson, the founding Executive Director of NYU's Center for Social Media and Politics**	**Midweek assignment: Search-engine-optimization (SEO) strategy plan for summer Olympics or presidential race.** **Due 6/23: TikTok report: Either a detailed look at a spot with evergreen appeal, such as an iconic NYC food or cultural spot; or a detailed "how to" guide, de-mystifying an aspect of NYC that might be useful to out-of-towners.**

6/24	**Nailing your final reports – review and discussion of winning strategies.** **Showcasing your personality in your reports: Using social platforms to connect with your audience.** **Facebook reactions: What prompts readers to register specific reactions – like, love, sad, ha-ha.** **Student-led discussion of final reports.**	**Final report due 6/26 before start of class: An in-depth multi-platform report on a community topic of social media interest, combined with a one-sheet aligned with SEO considerations.**