# PRL 319 and PRL 619: Social Media & Society for PR

**Time:**
**Location:**
**Course Numbers: PRL 319: 18118 and PRL 619: 18126**
**Instructor:** Dr. Erika Schneider, Assistant Professor, Public Relations
**Office:** Newhouse 3, 448
**Office Hours:**
**Email:** eschne03@syr.edu
**Phone:** +1 315-443-4036

**Prerequisite / Co-requisite**: None

**Welcome Statement:** Thank you for joining me in PRL 319 and PRL 619. This is a cross-leveled course, meaning that both undergraduate and graduate students are able to enroll. There are a few distinctions between the sections, such as the final project. I am excited to have you here and I hope to meet each of you at the level that you are at. Together, we'll dive into the latest research and real-world examples about how people connect, communicate, and make decisions online. We'll think about the power of stories, the challenges of misinformation, and the meaning behind every "like" or comment. More importantly, this class is designed to help YOU understand how to use social media thoughtfully, ethically, and creatively to build meaningful relationships in your career and daily life. I believe learning is most valuable when it's welcoming and clear, so expect open discussions, hands-on activities, and plenty of chances to share your ideas—no question is too small or too big. I'm looking forward to a great semester together!

**Audience**: This required class is intended for undergraduate and graduate public relations students seeking to understand the competing role social media plays within our personal and our professional lives.

**Course Description**: This explores the competing role social media plays within our personal and our professional lives as PR professionals.

**Course Overview**: This class examines how the interactions we have online with others, with brands, and with organizations impact us both individually and within the public relations profession. Today, a reliance on social media, artificial intelligence, and the digital realm helps keep us informed, entertained, and educated. At the same time, social media creates divides by spreading conflict, animosity, and propaganda. This course helps students develop an understanding of the pervasiveness of social media in many facets of our lives and ultimately the impact these advances have created for public relations practitioners.

**Credits:** 1.5 credits (One and a half credits)

**Learning Objectives:**

After taking this course, students will be able to:

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**Commented [ES1]:** Office hours will be framed as inviting. I will ensure that they are offered in the morning and afternoon on various days of the week to accommodate different work and course schedules. The goal is for each student to see a period of time in the office hours that works with their schedule. Beyond that, I will add "or by appointment" to allow for other meeting times that better fit their schedule

**Commented [ES2]:** The CRI shared strategies for warming up the language and creating an inviting environment. Cross-leveled sections can be confusing if students haven't enrolled in one before so I'm trying to break it down here and welcome them in with warmer language.

**Commented [ES3]:** These were pre-approved so I add a section below to interpret them. These remind me of the objectives we have in a PR campaign! SMART objectives should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. Jessamyn mentioned Clear, Attainable, Learning focused, Measurable, Specific, and Relevant. Since these objectives have been approved, here is a bit about my interpretation of them and how they could be observed through student engagement.

1. Summarize issues surrounding social media, technology, society, and the impact personally as well as on the practice of public relations.
2. Describe the effects of innovation and technology have on the way we relate to the world around us as well as ourselves.
3. Translate how to make responsible choices in the creation and consumption of social media based on awareness of global, social, ethical, and legal contexts.
4. Communicate ideas, information, arguments, and messages through social media to achieve a specific goal.
5. Analyze an awareness campaign based on issues and topics happening in society by writing a case study.

**More details**

What do these learning objectives mean? These are the outcomes that connects abstract goals to tangible skills to our concrete assignments, so you know why you are asked to engage in the course activities and how it builds towards the outcomes. From the assignments, discussion board posts, to engagement activities, this course has been intentionally designed to help you achieve the learning objectives above.

| Interpretating the learning objectives | Skills & concepts you'll learn | Activities that support skills towards this objective |
|---|---|---|
| Objective #1: You will be able to explain the big picture of social media, technology, and society—and reflect on how these affect your own life and the field of public relations. | - Identify key social, cultural, and professional issues linked to social media use.<br>- Understand how platforms influence personal behavior and PR practice.<br>- Recognize your social media patterns and their strategic potential. | - Discussion Board #1: Applying Uses and Gratifications Theory<br>- Assignment 1: My Social Media Uses and Gratifications (track and analyze your social media)<br>- In-class discussions on connecting uses and gratifications to PR. |
| Objective #2: You will understand how innovation and technology shape the way you relate both to the wider world and to yourself. | - Analyze the psychological and social effects of emerging tech.<br>- Understand how innovation shapes audience behaviors, preferences, and relationships.<br>- Explore implications for PR strategy and audience engagement. | - Week 1/2 activities: Explore UGT and technology's influence.<br>- Discussion Board #2: "Personify" a brand's online presence and evaluate engagement.<br>- In-class Engagement #1: Analyze reactive vs. proactive social media strategies in sports PR. |
| Objective #3: You will learn to make responsible and thoughtful choices when creating or consuming social media, considering the global, social, ethical, and legal contexts. | - Make ethical, legal, and socially responsible decisions in digital PR.<br>- Apply FTC guidelines, copyright law, and privacy considerations.<br>- Balance organizational goals with public trust. | - Assignment 2: Mis/Disinfo Infographic: Evaluate an organization's prebunking or debunking strategy.<br>- Discussion Board #3: Debate AI's role in PR and define ethical disclosure boundaries.<br>- Discussion Board #6: Analyze and create a brand social media policy. |
| Objective #4: You will gain skills to effectively | - Craft persuasive, audience-targeted digital messages. | - Assignment 3: Online Activism Video: Critique a hashtag activism |

| Interpretating the learning objectives | Skills & concepts you'll learn | Activities that support skills towards this objective |
|---|---|---|
| communicate your ideas and messages on social media to reach specific goals, whether it's to inform, inspire, or motivate others. | - Select the right platform, format, and tone for campaign goals.<br>- Use visuals and tools to strengthen message impact. | campaign in video form.<br>- Discussion Board #5: Create strategies to engage audiences while navigating selective exposure.<br>- Week 10/11 activities: Evaluate authentic vs. inauthentic brand activism. |
| Objective #5: You will analyze real awareness campaigns, breaking down their strategies and impact by writing case studies that highlight what works and what can be improved. | - Critically evaluate campaign strategies and outcomes.<br>- Apply theories like UGT, inoculation theory, and proactive crisis strategies to real cases.<br>- Use research to support effectiveness judgments and recommendations. | - Assignment 3: Online Activism Case Study Video (analyze a social media activism campaign).<br>- Week 6/7: Apply mis/disinformation response strategies.<br>- Present a pre/debunking campaign or feature story with research-backed recommendations. |

**ACEJMC Values and Competencies**

As a member of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication 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. For a full list of ACEJMC values and competencies, see http://www.acejmc.org/policies-process/principles/

**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.

**<u>Content Warning</u>**

In this class, we may discuss, read, or view materials that could result in emotional and psychological discomfort. The purpose of these materials is to encourage intellectual growth and inquiry about important issues. However, if your response to any materials becomes, or you anticipate that it may become, one that makes it difficult for you to learn and engage, please communicate with me so we can ensure your success in the class. My goal is to build a classroom community that allows for learning and growth, meets the course objectives, and fosters engagement and communication among all who share this space.

**<u>Bibliography/ Texts / Supplies – Required:</u>**

Required readings will be provided in a Readings folder on Blackboard. The list is available under "Reading References" on page 15.

**Commented [ES6]:** Prioritizing accessibility. I will retrieve PDFs through the library database and add them to a folder available to students. The full reading list is under "References" below the course schedule

**Undergraduate Students**

This course is out of a total of 200 points. Adding up the points for each assignment and using the following letter-grade scale will determine final grades in this course. The gradebook on Blackboard is maintained throughout the semester. For undergraduates, both the final grade and individual assignments are interpreted as:

| Grade | % Range | Point Range (out of 200) |
|-------|---------|--------------------------|
| A | 93.00–100 | 186.00–200 |
| A- | 90.00–92.99 | 180.00–185.99 |
| B+ | 87.00–89.99 | 174.00–179.99 |
| B | 83.00–86.99 | 166.00–173.99 |
| B- | 80.00–82.99 | 160.00–165.99 |
| C+ | 77.00–79.99 | 154.00–159.99 |
| C | 73.00–76.99 | 146.00–153.99 |
| C- | 70.00–72.99 | 140.00–145.99 |
| D+ | 67.00–69.99 | 134.00–139.99 |
| D | 63.00–66.99 | 126.00–133.99 |
| D- | 60.00–62.99 | 120.00–125.99 |
| F | 59.99 & lower | 0–119.99 |

**Graduate Students**

This course is out of a total of 250 points. Adding up the points for each assignment and using the following letter-grade scale will determine final grades in this course. The gradebook on Blackboard is maintained throughout the semester. For graduate students, both the final grade and individual assignments are interpreted as:

| Grade | % Range | Point Range (out of 250) |
|-------|---------|--------------------------|
| A | 93.00–100 | 232.50–250 |
| A- | 90.00–92.99 | 225.00–232.49 |

| Grade | % Range | Point Range (out of 250) |
|-------|---------|--------------------------|
| B+ | 87.00–89.99 | 217.50–224.99 |
| B | 83.00–86.99 | 207.50–217.49 |
| B- | 80.00–82.99 | 200.00–207.49 |
| C+ | 77.00–79.99 | 192.50–199.99 |
| C | 73.00–76.99 | 182.50–192.49 |
| C- | 70.00–72.99 | 175.00–182.49 |
| F | 69.99 & lower | 0–174.99 |

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 GPA to graduate from Syracuse University and cannot earn below a C in a course.

## Assignment Descriptions

These assignments provide students with theoretical and real-world contexts for applying the material learned from readings and lectures. Specific details surrounding each writing assignment can be found on Blackboard.

| Assignment | Description | Learning Objective Addressed | Undergraduate Value | Graduate Value |
|------------|-------------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| #1. My Social Media Uses & Gratifications | Track and analyze personal social media use, apply UGT to PR strategy. | 1 | 25 | 25 |
| #2. Mis/Disinfo Infographic | Create infographic evaluating a prebunking/debunking case. | 3 | 25 | 25 |
| #3. Online Activism | Critique a hashtag activism campaign in video format. | 4, 5 | 25 | 25 |
| Discussion Board Posts | Weekly posts applying course concepts to prompts. | 1–5 | 50 | 50 |
| In-class Engagement | In-class activities applying theory to practice. | 1–5 | 25 | 25 |
| Choose your own final | Exam, Feature Story, or Prebunking/Debunking Campaign (UG: 1; G: 2). | 3, 4, 5 | 50 | 100 |

**Commented [ES7]:** Created a table to organize the assignments, objectives, and weight

**MORE DETAILS**

**Assignment 1: My Social Media Uses and Gratifications**
Track your social media use in a log or through your phones tracking features for one week (during Week 1). In this assignment, you are asked to analyze your patterns and understand how they might contribute to PR social media strategies.
- Write a paragraph for each one of your three most-frequently used social media platforms. Describe how often they are accessed, how (app, desktop), and in what environments (at home, school, work, transportation, etc.). Describe the activities performed (scrolling, posting, messaging, liking, watching, etc.) and what prompted you to open the app (boredom, curiosity, staying updated, etc.). Also include which of the categories you'd classify your time on the app with an example for each use: Cognitive (information/learning); Affective (entertainment/emotional satisfaction); Personal integrative (confidence/status); Social integrative (relationship-building); Tension-release (relaxation/escape).
- In a fourth paragraph, select one company that you'd like to work for one day and share how you would target a social media user on each platform based on the uses and gratifications that you shared. The strategy could include the type of content, tone, frequency, or any other aspect of how you'd reach the audiences with the gratifications in mind.
- In a fifth paragraph, share how uses and gratifications theory help you understand social media users' habits? Are there ways in which platforms intentionally design features to appeal to these needs?

**Assignment 2:** Mis/Disinformation Infographic. 25 points.
Analyze a case where an organization has engaged in prebunking or debunking. It should be a real situation that has happened in past three years. Create an infographic (using any platform like Canva, InDesign, Word) that:
1. Describes issue (what is the mis- or disinformation) and how it has or could negatively affect the company and society
2. How the organization responded through prebunking or debunking (Include an image of their response, or a portion of their response if it is really long)
3. Your evaluation. What evidence did you have that makes you feel like it was an effective or ineffective response? What are your future recommendations for that company, the industry, or any PR professional dealing with similar issues?

**Assignment 3:** Online Activism. 25 points.
Critique a social media hashtag activism campaign that happened in the past three years which aimed at influencing the public to make a change, or to influence the government or a business/industry to make a change. Record a 4–5-minute video describing the situation (who led it, timeframe, what was the issue promoted, etc.), and if and how it influenced change. There are no requirements for slides but share at least three examples of the content (such as a company's response to the movement, Tweets using the hashtag, or other visuals). It has to be at least 4 minutes and no more than 5, submitted as a video on Blackboard. You are welcome to record on a phone, Zoom recording, or any other means but there should be audio and video in the recording.

**Commented [ES8]:** Changed this submission format to an infographic - helps brings ideas to life and they'll gain experience producing this type of communication, which is material they may be expected to produce in their professional PR roles

**Commented [ES9]:** Varying the format - This use to be an essay but I've changed it to a video format since there are already multiple writing assignments

**Discussion Board Posts.** 50 points (10 at 5 points each)

There are ten discussion boards worth points throughout the semester. Read, listen to, or watch the assigned readings during the assigned week and respond to the prompts (and your peers)!

> **Commented [ES10]:** Added in-class participation to this as well to provide more opportunities with low stakes (5-10 points each)

**In-class Engagement.** 25 points (5 at 5 points each)

There will be opportunities to earn points during class, such as through groupwork and activities, that are designed to actively connect theory to practice, encourage teamwork, and build critical thinking around social media, PR, and digital communication challenges. Each of these engagements includes a mix of hands-on research, data analysis, reflection on ethical and strategic implications, and team collaboration, all aimed at deepening understanding of strategic social media communication in contemporary PR contexts. They also encourage practical skills in measuring and managing digital relationships, responding to crises, and navigating emerging trends.

> **Commented [ES11]:** Each of these examples below provide a way to show engagement through different formats (written, visual, word-of-mouth, etc.) and with each other to allow for peer-to-peer learning

- In-class engagement #1: Measuring Relationships in PR. Analyze relationship-building strategies on social media, exemplified by content like team tweets. You will explore and reflect on the quality of interactions, direct communication, and fan engagement metrics to link to PR relationship theories.
- In-class engagement #2: Artificial PR Intelligence. Focuses on ethical and professional challenges when integrating AI into PR practice. Critically reflect on the use of generative AI tools and implications for communication ethics.
- In-class engagement #3: Mis/Disinformation. Engage with multiple media formats (readings, videos) about misinformation and disinformation, analyzing tools for detection, fact-checking, and the spread of false content. This develops skills in recognizing and responding to digital misinformation.
- In-class engagement #4: Influencers and Disclosures. Teams research and analyze the authenticity of social media followings for brands, estimating fake follower percentages and engagement quality. Discuss and reflect on the reputational risks and develop proactive and reactive PR recommendations based on data insights.
- In-class engagement #5: Hashtag Activism & Social Movements. Explore and reflect on online activism dynamics, brand activism, and cancel culture themes, applying these to real-world communication strategies and public responses.

## CHOOSE YOUR OWN FINAL

**Undergraduate Students: PICK ONE OF THE THREE OPTIONS**
**Exam OR Mis/Disinformation Campaign Presentation OR Feature Story. 50 points**

> **Commented [ES12]:** Providing three options here to plan for learner variability. This builds in choice to offer three different ways for students to demonstrate learning

**Graduate Students: PICK TWO OF THE THREE OPTIONS**
**Exam OR Mis/Disinformation Campaign Presentation OR Feature Story. 100 points**

> **Commented [ES13]:** Helps differentiate the undergrad and grad sections

**Exam. 50 points**
I will provide you a 25-point exam that has both open and close-ended questions. There may be multiple choice and essay questions about topics learned throughout the semester. It is closed book and on paper during class.

**Develop and Present a Prebunking or Debunking Campaign. 50 points**
Find a real piece of mis- or disinformation that is currently circulating online. Pretend you're working for a company, and it is your job in PR to implement a prebunking or debunking campaign to address a real piece of mis- or disinformation that actually exists and could affect your company. Write a two-page, double-spaced paper that addresses the following: What's the background of the issue and what makes it mis or disinformation? What is the impact of the issue on your consumers, your company, and society? What strategies would you use to prebunk or debunk and justify it (key messages, platforms, source, etc.). Provide at least five academic sources in. justifying your response recommendation in APA style. Develop a slide deck with five slides to present this in class. The slides should introduce the issue (mis/disinformation), the company you're representing and how the issue affects your company, your prebunk/debunk campaign pitch.

**Innovation in Social/Digital Media Feature Story**. **50 points.**
The feature story assignment develops longer-form, soft-story writing skills. You will be required to find a compelling topic related to innovative digital technology or social media and then generate your own information through research and an interview. You will identify, prioritize and organize the information you have and write an interesting story. In this story, you must interview and provide quotes from at least one industry professional who has expertise on your topic. The format of this submission is to post it on your portfolio as a blog and on a professional, public social media platform, such as LinkedIn. The post should be a condensed version of the full feature (that links the full version) with the goal of sharing insights on innovation in this space and build your credibility.

## Course-specific Policies

**Attendance**
I value your presence and the unique contributions and I understand that life can bring unexpected situations so I approach attendance with respect, flexibility, and open communication. Please aim to attend all scheduled sessions and if you have to miss a class, I would like to help you stay connected. Whether through shared notes from a peer or scheduling an office hour, I can work with you to keep up. Email me at eschne03@syr.edu. Refer to the university policy for insight into circumstances like religious holidays and when to request an absence notification from the Student Outreach and Retention (SOaR) office.

**Technology Policy**
This will be determined during our first course meeting. If we see devices as distractions, what types of policies should we implement? There may be times where I create opportunities for technology to be used, such as during engagement activities and polls. Outside of these specific conditions, what should we determine for our technology policy and how should it be enforced?

**Correspondence**
I prefer to be contacted via email with the exception of emergencies. I will do my best in responding to an email within 24 hours. All email subject lines regarding this course should begin with "PRL 319/619" and be followed by the topic of your email such as "Absence" or "Assignment 2 question."

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**Commented [ES14]:** Added flexibility in here - acknowledging that absences happen but providing information on what to do when it happens

**Commented [ES15]:** Here, we're co-creating a policy to establish mutual understanding

**Deadlines**

Deadlines will be an important part of your career and as such, they are an important part of this course. All assignments are due on the assigned date and will be deducted 50% if submitted after the deadline. They will be worth 0 (zero) points if submitted more than two days after the deadline. This applies to all assignments unless the student has contacted me for permission to submit after the deadline for special circumstances. There will be ONE exception granted per student where you are allowed to submit an assignment within 24 hours after the deadline and it will not be deducted the 50%. This does not apply to in-class engagement, exams, or presentations since those happen during course times. This is one allowance and after that, the policy resumes.

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments should be submitted in Word format via Blackboard. I provide feedback directly on Word documents using the "Comments" function on Blackboard. This allows me to make detailed notes for your use. Assignments received through email and/or in a format other than Word will result in no credit (zero points) for the assignment.

**Format of Written Work**

Unless otherwise specified in assignment details, all papers must be typewritten, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman, standard 1" margins and submitted in Word format. Consider spell checking as only a first step: proofread, edit and revise all work. Always keep a copy of your work and be sure to make copies of group work for your portfolio. Read the assignments and list of due dates carefully for formatting instructions. Submissions that do not conform to the requested guidelines will be rejected and the assignment will earn 0 points.

**University Attendance Policy (including absence notification)**

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 Early-Semester Progress Reports and Mid-Semester Progress Reports in Orange SUccess to alert the Registrar and Financial Aid Office on non-attendance. For more information visit: Information for Students: Non-attendance or Stopped Attending

If a student is unable to participate in-person or virtually for an extended period of time (48 hours or more), the student may request an absence notification from their home school/college Dean's Office or through Student Outreach and Retention (SOaR) office. Instructors will be notified via the "Absence Notification" flag in Orange SUccess.

Barnes Center at the Arch (Health, Counseling, etc.) staff will not provide medical excuse notes for students. When Barnes Center staff determine it is medically necessary to remove a student from classes, they will coordinate with SOaR case management staff to provide appropriate notification to faculty through Orange Success. For absences lasting less than 48 hours, students are encouraged to discuss academic arrangements directly with their faculty.

Additional information may be found at Student Outreach and Retention: Absence Notifications

Students should also review the University's religious observance policy and make the required arrangements at the beginning of each semester.

**Syracuse University Policies:** Syracuse University has a variety of other policies designed to guarantee that students live and study in a community respectful of their needs and those of fellow students. Some of the most important of these concern:

**Diversity and Disability** (ensuring that students are aware of their rights and responsibilities in a diverse, inclusive, accessible, bias-free campus community) can be found here, at: https://diversity.syracuse.edu/disability-access/.

**Religious Observances Notification and Policy** (steps to follow to request accommodations for the observance of religious holidays) can be found here, at: https://policies.syr.edu/policies/university-governance-ethics-integrity-and-legal-compliance/religious-observances-policy/

**Orange SUccess** (tools to access a variety of SU resources, including ways to communicate with advisors and faculty members) can be found here, at: http://orangesuccess.syr.edu/getting-started-2/

**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/

**Academic Integrity**
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 Language:**
Based on the specific learning outcomes and assignments in this course, artificial intelligence is permitted in assignments that specifically request you to use it within the instructions. You can also use AI for grammar and spelling editing, such as Grammarly. 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.

**How your work might be used in the future**

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 and render the work anonymous by removing all personal identification.

**Syllabus Modification**

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. The instructor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

**Course Schedule**

| Week | Topic | Readings & Assignments/In-Class Engagement | Learning Objective |
|------|-------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Introduction to Social Media Platforms; Theories for Understanding Social & Digital Media Research in PR; Uses & Gratifications | No required reading due today, but review the Blackboard course page, syllabus, and watch the Welcome Video before class<br>On the first day, introduce yourself, one career goal, and how at least one of our course learning objectives might help get you there.<br>Track personal social media use for one week.<br>Discussion Board #1: Social Media Platform Analysis assigned. | Summarize issues surrounding social media, technology, society, and the impact personally as well as on the practice of public relations. |
| 2 | Uses & Gratifications (cont.) | Reading: Roth-Cohen & Avidar's (2022) "A decade of social media in public relations research."<br>Discussion Board #1 due.<br>Introduce Assignment #1: Your Social Media Uses & Grats. | Interpret the functions and capabilities of social media and digital technology as it relates to personal and professional life. |
| 3 | Measuring Relationships in PR | Reading: Watkins & Lewis "Twitter as Gateway to Relationship Marketing."<br>Recommended: SM Etiquette & Ethics; PRSA Ethics Code.<br>Discussion Board #2 due.<br>In-class engagement #1. | Analyze an awareness campaign based on issues and topics happening in society by writing a case study. |
| 4 | Measuring Relationships in PR (cont.) | No new readings.<br>Common pitfalls and opportunities of measuring relationships.<br>Assignment #1 due.<br>Introduce Assignment #2. | Describe the effects of innovation and technology on the way we relate to the world around us as well as ourselves. |
| 5 | Artificial PR Intelligence | Reading: Dong & van den Berg (2025) Revisiting PR professionalism and ethics in the generative AI era.<br>Discussion Board #3 due.<br>In-class engagement #2. | Translate how to make responsible choices in the creation and consumption of social media based on awareness of global, social, ethical, and legal contexts. |

**Commented [ES17]:** I'm inviting students in from Students Consulting on Teaching (SCOT) to gain learner feedback and see how this approach resonates!

**Commented [ES18]:** I've realized that an introduction to social media and specific platforms is necessary, as there is typically a sizable portion of international students or folks who just don't use certain platforms that often. I've realized that the platforms I've largely taught are popular in the U.S. but I have not integrated major platforms that dominate other parts of the world. The revision introduces major sites used around the world and Uses and Gratifications Theory to show how people use certain platforms for different purposes.

**Commented [ES19]:** Welcoming strategy here - I'll upload a linked video on Blackboard that breaks down the course schedule and syllabus highlights. I'll also include these highlights on a one-page fact sheet to share with students on the first day of class

**Commented [ES20]:** Helping students get more familiar with our goals, helping myself get familiar with their goals and having them engage with the learning objectives

**Commented [ES21R20]:** Time for learning names! We will also have a name game where students create a "brand" for their partner.

**Commented [ES22R20]:** We will have a discussion in class about social media and digital technology use. They'll have an opportunity to think, pair, and share to get them in the mindset of the course and get to know at least one peer on a first-name basis. It won't be a syllabus day for us!

**Commented [ES23]:** Prior discussion board posts focused heavily on the 3-2-1 method, but there was little variation. Different prompts have been introduced to keep these interesting. The point is to contribute unique ideas to a greater conversation and sometimes 3-2-1 posts can get redundant.

**Commented [ES24]:** Productive error activity and peer-to-peer learning: We will have peers critique ideas for measuring relationships in class to assess the limitations of metrics. Before the activity starts, it will be reminded that the classroom is a space where learning happens, and with that, mistakes should too! We will all learn from one another (myself included) so don't take the critique personally. Listen and they'll be able to provide responses to the feedback in class

| | | Check-in #1: Survey (anonymous): What's going well? What could be better? Reflect on the class so far. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Mis/Disinformation | Readings: Mis vs. Disinformation, Birdwatch(The Verge), Detecting Deepfakes(Scientific American), Fox News misinformation clip.<br><br>In-class engagement #3. | Summarize issues surrounding social media, technology, society, and the impact on PR practice. |
| 7 | Mis/Disinformation (cont.) | Reading: Boman & Schneider (2021) Proactive crisis strategies & astroturf attacks.<br>Discussion Board #4 due. | Analyze an awareness campaign based on issues and topics happening in society by writing a case study. |
| 8 | Selective Exposure | Readings: Wang et al. (2024) "Selective avoidance & surveillance anxiety"; Li et al. (2025) "Intersectional political consumerism on TikTok."<br>Discussion Board #5 due.<br>Assignment #2 due.<br>Introduce Assignment #3. | Describe the effects of innovation and technology on the way we relate to the world around us as well as ourselves. |
| 9 | Influencers & Disclosures | Reading: Quesenberry's "Social Media Law, Ethics, & Etiquette" (pp. 316–339).<br>Discussion Board #6 due.<br>In-class engagement #4. | Translate how to make responsible choices in the creation and consumption of social media based on awareness of global, social, ethical, and legal contexts. |
| 10 | Hashtag Activism & Social Movements | Reading: Kuo's (2018) "Racial justice activist hashtags.<br>Discussion Board #7 due.<br>Assignment #3 due.<br>Introduce Final Project. | Analyze an awareness campaign based on issues and topics happening in society by writing a case study. |
| 11 | Hashtag Activism & Social Movements (cont.) | Readings: Blackout Tuesday (NY Times), Brand Activism (Adweek), Pew Cancel Culture.<br>Discussion Board #8 due.<br>In-class engagement #5.<br>Reviewing and recapping concepts learned so far!<br>Check-in #2: Survey (anonymous): What's going well? What could be better? Reflect on the class so far. | Summarize issues surrounding social media, technology, society, and the impact on PR practice. |

**Commented [ES25]:** I included this time for scheduled feedback from the class (there are two points in the semester during weeks 5 and 11)

**Commented [ES26]:** In many cases, I made topics span two weeks instead of one. For example, mis/disinformation is week 6-7, Uses and Grats is Week 1-2, Measuring Relationships is Week 3-4, and hashtag activism/social movements is week 10-11. The idea behind is that it can give students time for the readings and lecture to sink in, and also allows some flexibility for me (and students) to adapt to any situations that arise. For instance, if someone is ill during week 6, they are still able to learn and engage with the concepts of mis/disinformation in the following week's class.

**Commented [ES27]:** Connecting all the dots here! Helping with continuity

**Commented [ES28]:** Check-in #2 for scheduled feedback

| 12 | The Future | Student choice reading for Discussion Board #9. Discussion Board #9 due. Practice: Rehearsing final presentations and questions | Translate how to make responsible choices in the creation and consumption of social media based on awareness of global, social, ethical, and legal contexts. |
|----|-----------|------|------|
| 13 | Final Presentations | No readings. Discussion Board #10 due. Present final projects. | Communicate ideas, information, arguments, and messages through social media to achieve a specific goal. |
| 14 | Final Presentations & Final Exam | No readings. Final exam. | Communicate ideas, information, arguments, and messages through social media to achieve a specific goal. |

**Commented [ES29]:** In-class practice time. This is the largest assignment (the final) so I was to really help them feel prepared for it and clarify any quesitons

**Reading References**

Boman, C. D., & Schneider, E. J. (2021). Finding an antidote: Testing the use of proactive crisis strategies to protect organizations from astroturf attacks. *Public Relations Review, 47*(1). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.102004

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Watkins, B. A., & Lewis, R. (2013). Twitter as gateway to relationship marketing: A content analysis of relationship building via Twitter. In Eds. Hana S. Noor Al-Deen and John Allen Hendricks "Social Media and Strategic Communications." Palgrave Macmillan.

Quesenberry, K. (2024). Social media law, ethics, and etiquette (pp. 316–339). In "Marketing, Advertising, and Public Relations in the Consumer Revolution." Bloomsbury.

The Verge. (2021). Birdwatch: Twitter's community-based fact-checking program. Retrieved August 14, 2025, from https://www.theverge.com/2021/1/25/22248903/twitter-birdwatch-fact-checking-misinformation

Scientific American. (2020, July 20). Detecting deepfakes. Retrieved August 14, 2025, from https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/detecting-deepfakes1/

Fox News. (2021 July 16). Fox's take on misinformation [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved August 14, 2025, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVXnoMHmFsc

The New York Times. (2020, June 2). What Blackout Tuesday was and why it mattered. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/arts/music/what-blackout-tuesday.html

**Commented [ES30]:** I wanted to share (and cite) the readings referenced in the syllabus and also model APA style, which is the citation style I require in essays they submit

**Commented [ES31]:** Integrated diversity in terms of the topics and communities represented, as well as the authors (e.g., from various career stages, race/ethnicities, geographic regions, etc.)

Adweek. (2019, June 19). Brand activism is driving more meaningful connections. Retrieved August 14, 2025, from https://www.adweek.com/agencies/brand-activism-is-driving-more-meaningful-connections/

Pew Research Center. (2021, May 19). Americans and cancel culture: Where some see calls for accountability, others see censorship and punishment. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/05/19/americans-and-cancel-culture-where-some-see-calls-for-accountability-others-see-censorship-punishment/

# Detailed Schedule

Blue = Questions that we will answer during the week
Green = Discussion Board
Yellow = In-class Engagement
Gray = Assignments

## Week 1-2: PR Theories for understanding social and digital media use. Uses and Gratifications Theory

**Question we'll answer during weeks 1 and 2:** Why and how do social media users choose platforms and content to satisfy their cognitive, affective, personal integrative, social integrative, and tension-release needs, and how does this understanding shape the personal and professional use of social media?

Key takeaways: We will briefly overview fundamental theories that can help us understand how and why people use social and digital media, and how it can help us understand our responsibilities in PR. In week 2, we will focus on one in particular. Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) helps us understand why and how people choose particular media platforms and content to fulfill their specific needs and desires. Rather than focusing on the effects that media has on people, UGT places the emphasis on the audience as active agents who select media to meet psychological and social objectives. Active audience: People are not passive receivers of media; they intentionally select media channels that they believe will best gratify their needs. Goal-oriented media use: Media consumption is motivated by clear goals, such as information-seeking, entertainment, relaxation, social interaction, and escape. User-centered: The theory prioritizes the reasons and motivations of the user over the actual content or influence of media itself. Major Types of Needs Satisfied Through Media"

- Cognitive needs: Seeking information, knowledge, and understanding.
- Affective needs: Emotional satisfaction, aesthetic pleasure, or entertainment.
- Personal integrative needs: Strengthening credibility, confidence, or status.
- Social integrative needs: Building and maintaining relationships with friends and family.
- Tension-release needs: Relaxation and escape from daily stressors.

**Discussion Board #1:** Apply UGT to understand why people choose certain media and how those choices fulfill their personal and social needs. Take a look at the 35 social media platforms that have the greatest number of monthly active users: https://explodingtopics.com/blog/top-social-media-platforms. Select one of the platforms that is currently available in the U.S. (no two students in the class may select the same one). You have two slides to prepare your information. On your first slide, provide the following information: Your name and the platform, the launch date, user demographics, monthly active users, key features and functions, and include a screenshot of the site. On your second slide, provide a UGT analysis that shares how users engage with your platform using the five main UGT categories. Include screenshots for examples of what this looks like:

- Cognitive needs (information-seeking/learning) – How does the platform provide knowledge, facts, or updates?

- Affective needs (entertainment/emotional satisfaction) – What forms of entertainment or emotional engagement are common?
- Personal integrative needs (prestige/status/credibility) – How might users build their reputation or identity here?
- Social integrative needs (relationships/community) – How does the platform enable connections and community?
- Tension-release needs (relaxation/escape) – How do users use it for escapism or stress relief?

Spend time on the app to observe this and do your research. You can either conduct primary research, like asking friends who have used the app, or secondary, like reviewing and citing existing research. If you use external sources, cite using APA format. You will be assessed on your facts about the app and UGT needs analysis (with examples). I will ask that you share the information in class and if there are any unique gratifications that set this platform apart.

**Assignment 1: My Social Media Uses and Gratifications**
Track your social media use in a log or through your phones tracking features for one week (during Week 1). In this assignment, you are asked to analyze your patterns and understand how they might contribute to PR social media strategies.
- Write a paragraph for each one of your three most-frequently used social media platforms. Describe how often they are accessed, how (app, desktop), and in what environments (at home, school, work, transportation, etc.). Describe the activities performed (scrolling, posting, messaging, liking, watching, etc.) and what prompted you to open the app (boredom, curiosity, staying updated, etc.). Also include which of the categories you'd classify your time on the app with an example for each use:
  - Cognitive (information/learning)
  - Affective (entertainment/emotional satisfaction)
  - Personal integrative (confidence/status)
  - Social integrative (relationship-building)
  - Tension-release (relaxation/escape)
- In a fourth paragraph, select one company that you'd like to work for one day and share how you would target a social media user on each platform based on the uses and gratifications that you shared. The strategy could include the type of content, tone, frequency, or any other aspect of how you'd reach the audiences with the gratifications in mind. In a fifth paragraph, share how uses and gratifications theory help you understand social media users' habits? Are there ways in which platforms intentionally design features to appeal to these needs?

## Week 3 and 4: Measuring Relationships in PR

**Question we'll answer during weeks 3-4:** How do you measure relationships on digital and social media?

**Discussion Board Post #2:** Pick a company and "personify" their social media persona as if they were at a party. Describe their communication style based on what you see in their replies, posts, stories, and interactions. Using engagement metrics, interaction quality, and network/community building, explain how you would measure their "party skills" (relationship building) on social media. Suggest one creative PR strategy this "person" could use to become more memorable and build stronger "friendships" (relationships) online.

**In-class Engagement #1:** According to the reading, the reactive relationship-building level was the most frequent in NBA team tweets. Can you give me an example of a WNBA team utilizing reactive method on X (formerly known as Twitter), as described in the study and why it might support consumers toward proactive interactions? Provide the screenshot, describe what the reactive method and why it could be effective for fostering connection.

Key Takeaways: There are measurement approaches informed by quantitative data (counts of interactions) and qualitative (content and sentiment analysis), reflecting the multifaceted nature of relationships in strategic social media communication contexts. We'll learn about metrics, such as the numbers of likes, comments, shares, etc. on posts indicate audience involvement and responsiveness. The frequency and quality of direct interactions such as replies and mentions can reflect relationship depth. For the quality and type, there are two-way communication indicators, such as dialogue between brand and consumers or between consumers themselves. Network analyses map connections and community formations around brands, such as brand-specific hashtag usage, showing development of brand communities. Sentiment and attitudinal measures help us assess positive, neutral, or negative sentiments in consumer comments to understand relationship tone. You can also assess the frequency of interaction to understand regularity of communication efforts and consumer engagement over time (to indicate sustained relationships). There are strengths and limitations to each of these measures.

- **Assignment 1 Due**
- **Assignment 2 Introduced**. Mis/Disinformation Infographic. Analyze a case where an organization has engaged in prebunking or debunking. It should be a real situation that has happened in past three years. Create an infographic (using any platform like Canva, InDesign, Word) that:
  1. Describes issue (what is the mis- or disinformation) and how it has or could negatively affect the company and society
  2. How the organization responded through prebunking or debunking (Include an image of their response, or a portion of their response if it is really long).
  3. Your evaluation. What evidence did you have that makes you feel like it was an effective or ineffective response? What are your future recommendations for that company, the industry, or any PR professional dealing with similar issues?

## Week 5: Artificial PR Intelligence

==Question we'll answer during week 5:== How can PR professionals ethically and effectively navigate the opportunities and challenges posed by generative AI while balancing personal values, organizational goals, and societal responsibilities? Check-in #1.

==Discussion Board #3:== Why do you think that a human PR professional will never get replaced by AI (OR why do you think that AI can fully replace a PR professional)?

Reading due today: Dong, C., & van den Berg, M. (2025). Revisiting PR professionalism and ethics in the generative AI era through PR practitioners' insights. Public Relations Review, 51(3), 102582. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2025.102582

Key takeaways:
- Individual-level benefits: increased productivity, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness.
- Organizational benefits: improved performance, career advancement for practitioners, loyalty to profession and employer.
- Societal/industry-wide benefits: enhanced accessibility and inclusion in PR.
- Challenges & Vulnerabilities
  - Lack of education/training in GAI and its ethical use.
  - Job security anxiety linked to AI adoption. Why are you here?
  - Systemic issue of institutional ethical incompetence, not just a personal skills gap.
  - Debate over what "transparency" in GAI use means in practice.
  - Pseudo-transparency: partial or selective disclosure shaped by client trust, reputation, and risk avoidance. What might be the consequences of "pseudo-transparency" for stakeholder trust?
  - Ethical tension between honesty and strategic ambiguity.
  - Unclear boundaries between human accountability (misuse or misinformation oversight) and technology's inherent flaws.
- Need for Evolving Ethical Frameworks
  - Call for context-sensitive, practitioner-informed AI ethics in PR.
  - PR professionals navigate competing duties, moral tensions, and ambiguous guidelines in real-world contexts.
  - Importance of caring, human-centered approaches that support practitioners rather than solely holding them accountable.
  - Role of organizations in supporting skill-building and ethical literacy.
  - Importance of revising codes of ethics to account for AI.

==In-class Engagement #2:== In your team, develop a slide in our slide deck that addresses the following:
1. What are the circumstances in which you believe PR pros should disclose AI use and why (where do you draw the line, with a specific example)?
2. Put a PR-related prompt into GenAI, such as "In one sentence, what is the most important thing to learn for a job in PR?," "Who are the most famous PR professionals in history," or any other PR-related prompt. Report the output and tell me one reason why you agree with the output, and one reason why you disagree with it.

## Week 6 and 7: Mis/Disinformation

**Question we'll answer during weeks 6 and 7:** How can we, as information consumers AND emerging PR professionals, effectively manage mis- and disinformation?

Reading due today: Blogs linked for Week 6. Week 7: Boman, C. D., & Schneider, E. J. (2021). Finding an antidote: Testing the use of proactive crisis strategies to protect organizations from astroturf attacks. Public Relations Review, 47(1), 102004. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.102004.

**Discussion Board #4:** Identify three real situations that has happened in the past two weeks that warrants strategic silence, PR supportive, and the inoculation strategy from a company. Why do you think the strategies are appropriate for each situation and how do they differ from the strategy that the company actually used?

Key takeaways:
- What's the difference between mis/disinformation?
- What is our responsibility as consumers of media and PR professionals?
- Proactive communication: Organizations facing disinformation-based paracrises benefit from proactive strategies such as pre-bunking (forewarning about potential attacks) and PR supportive messaging (positively emphasizing the organization's mission).
- These strategies are more effective than strategic silence, which tends to worsen credibility and reputation outcomes.
- Pre-bunking can reduce the credibility of attackers and protect the organization's own credibility and reputation better than other strategies.
- Applying inoculation theory helps prepare audiences to resist persuasion by misleading or false information even before the attack occurs.
- The spread of misinformation and disinformation is amplified by social media, where information is consumed rapidly and often unquestioned.
    - Communication efforts must be agile, with shorter reaction times and ongoing environmental scanning to detect early warning signs and respond before misinformation spreads widely.
    - Deliberate creation and spread of disinformation (e.g., astroturfing) cross ethical lines but are increasingly common in political and nonprofit sectors.
    - Silence or non-response can be interpreted as weakness or acceptance of false claims, damaging organizational standing.
    - Forewarning messages combined with counterarguments about potential attacks increase effectiveness.

**In-class Engagement #3:** You'll be in teams, and I will design scenarios that involve false information spreading rapidly on social media about your organization (e.g., fake news stories, conspiracy theories, manipulated images, astroturfing campaigns, etc.). I will challenge teams to identify and analyze the nature and source of the misinformation or disinformation. It will be up to the teams to determine if it is mis- or disinformation and their suggested company response strategy.

## Week 8: Selective Exposure

==Question we'll answer during week 8:== How do identity, media engagement, and psychological factors shape what information people choose to avoid or support online, and what are the consequences for consumer behavior, social connectedness, and democratic discourse?"

Readings due today:
Wang, Y., Ahmed, S., & Bee, A. W. T. (2024). Selective avoidance as a cognitive response: examining the political use of social media and surveillance anxiety in avoidance behaviours. Behaviour & Information Technology, 43(3), 590-604. https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2023.2182609

Li, M., Haley, E., & Youn, K. (2025). Intersectional Political Consumerism on TikTok: How Selective Exposure to Content Creators and TikTok Advertising Engagement Influence Black Cisgender Heterosexual and Black LGBTQ Consumers. Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising, 1-24. https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2025.2529004

Key Takeaways:
- For the first reading, takeaways are that social media news engagement led to more avoidance. Actively liking/commenting on political news increases the tendency to avoid opposing views. On the other hand, weak-tie political talks promoted avoidance (conversations with distant contacts often push people toward echo chambers).
- Surveillance anxiety drives avoidance. Fear of being watched online leads users to limit exposure and connections. Higher cognitive ability reduces avoidance and buffers effects of weak ties/surveillance anxiety.
- Generally, younger users, women, and those highly interested in politics are more likely to avoid opposing perspectives. Avoidance narrows information diversity, fuels polarization, and weakens democratic discourse.
- For the second reading, higher TikTok ad engagement is positively associated with both boycotting and buycotting.
- Social identity gratifications: Intersectional identity salience shaped content selection differently for marginalized subgroups. Demonstrates that representation from intersectionally marginalized creators can influence activism-oriented consumer behavior beyond identity match.
- Exposure to Black LGBTQ creators increases likelihood of buycotting (reward-oriented political consumption) for both Black cishet and Black LGBTQ audiences.
- Black LGBTQ audiences exposed to Black LGBTQ creators report greater social connectedness than Black cishet viewers. Black LGBTQ people feel less socially connected than cishet peers (marginalization and historical distrust in institutions?)
- Consider ad engagement metrics when planning for purchase behavior among intersectional audiences.
- Tailor influencer identity to audience's most salient identity markers.

==Discussion Board #5:== Imagine you are part of a PR team tasked with managing a brand's online presence during a time when social media users are highly selective about the information they

engage with. How do you think different social identities, emotional factors like anxiety about privacy, and users' habits of liking or avoiding certain content affect what they believe and share? Based on these dynamics, what creative strategies would you suggest for PR professionals to build trust, encourage openness, and foster positive engagement with diverse audiences— while navigating challenges like echo chambers and disinformation? Share your ideas and at least one example from a real brand.

**Assignment 2 Due**
**Assignment 3 Introduced:** Online Activism. Critique a social media hashtag activism campaign that happened in the past three years which aimed at influencing the public to make a change, or to influence the government or a business/industry to make a change. Record a 4–5-minute video describing the situation (who led it, timeframe, what was the issue promoted, etc.), and if and how it influenced change. There are no requirements for slides but share at least three examples of the content (such as a company's response to the movement, Tweets using the hashtag, or other visuals). It has to be at least 4 minutes and no more than 5, submitted as a video on Blackboard. You are welcome to record on a phone, Zoom recording, or any other means but there should be audio and video in the recording.

## Week 9: Influencers and Disclosures

Question we'll answer in week 9: How can brands create clear, comprehensive social media policies that address legal, ethical, and practical concerns, such as FTC endorsement guidelines, content attribution, privacy laws, and disclosure requirements, to effectively manage influencer relationships and protect their online reputation?

Reading: "Social Media Law, Ethics, and Etiquette" by Keith Quesenberry, pages 316-339

Key topics:
- Effects on Mental Health and Society
- FTC Endorsement Guides
- Disclosures
- Social Media Policy
- Attribution in Content Curation
- UGC Policy
- Digital Millennium Copyright Act
- The California Consumer Protection Act

Discussion Board #6: Within one industry, find three company's public social media policies. Provide the URLs to the policies and then make a list of required sections from this. Create a template for a brand social media policy and write your own guide based on the required sections.

In-class Engagement #4: What percentage of the followers of your favorite brands are fake? In your team, discuss why might a brand have fake or inactive followers? How could fake followers impact the brand's reputation, credibility, and PR strategies? What does the engagement rate reveal about the "realness" of the audience? Create a slide deck with three slides: 1. Title slide with your team members' names; 2. A follower analysis of one company (with an estimated fake follower % and engagement insights). 3. Any risks? Provide one proactive recommendation (How could your company address their present situation right now), and one reactive recommendation (If your company were to be exposed for fake followers, what is your recommended response strategy?). After this, we will reflect on how digital metrics shape PR decision-making, trust-building online, and the challenges of measuring relationships on social media.

## Week 10 and 11: Hashtag Activism and Social Movements

**Question we'll answer during weeks 10 and 11:** How can social media hashtags be used to effectively communicate ideas and mobilize communities toward social change? Check-in #2

**Discussion Board #7:** In week 10, you are submitting Assignment 3, analyzing a hashtag activism campaign that happened in the past three years. In Discussion Board #7, write a post (150-200 words) reflecting on the hashtag campaign you chose for your video. Briefly restate your critique points including who led it, timeframe, issue promoted, and how it influenced change. Highlight one key insight you gained about digital activism or hashtag activism's impact.

> **Commented [ES33]:** scaffolding - This helps them walk before they run. It touches on a larger assignment to "soft-launch" their idea and find a way to effectively communicate it (before presenting it in class

**Readings:**
Week 10: Kuo, R. (2018). Racial justice activist hashtags: Counterpublics and discourse circulation. New Media & Society, 20(2), 495-514. https://doi.org/10.1177/146144481666348
Week 11: #BlackoutTuesday, Brand Activism, Cancel Culture

Key takeaways:
- #Solidarityisforwhitewomen was created by Mikki Kendall in 2013 to critique mainstream white feminism's exclusion of women of color, sparking other feminist of color hashtag movements like #NotYourAsianSidekick. They formed digital counterpublics that amplified marginalized feminist of color voices, allowing them to connect, share experiences, and push for a more intersectional feminist movement.
- The #NotYourAsianSidekick network was larger and featured strong connections between mainstream media sites and race-based feminist blogs, demonstrating how the hashtag fostered cross-community solidarity within and beyond AAPI publics.
- Hashtags function not only by content but through building and activating networks that move discourse from marginalized peripheries toward mainstream feminist publics, bridging enclaves, counterpublics, and dominant groups.
- These digital feminist hashtag campaigns are tools for generating collective identity, solidarity, and mobilization around racial justice and intersectional feminist politics, expanding social movement tactics in online environments.

**Discussion Board #8:** Respond to peers on Discussion Board Post #7! Read at least two other students' posts on the discussion board. Respond to each post with a thoughtful comment of at least 100 words. Your responses should engage with their analysis by either connecting it to another activism campaign, questioning an assumption, or adding new information/examples related to hashtag activism.

> **Commented [ES34]:** Peer-to-peer learning. Even though each student only took on one case, here I want them to learn about two additional cases to understand the various contexts that activism lives within

**Week 11 In-class Engagement #5:** Share one recent (in the past year) example of authentic brand activism on digital or social media platforms AND one inauthentic example. You can choose any brand campaign that relates to a social or political issue. In one paragraph, share what made it example authentic (or inauthentic). What challenges do brands face in balancing genuine activism and how can they overcome them?

**Assignment 3 Due**
**Final Introduced**

## Week 12: The Future

**Question we'll answer during week 12:** How are emerging technologies, shifting societal expectations, and evolving media landscapes shaping the future roles, strategies, and ethical responsibilities of public relations professionals?

Reading: Your choice! See Discussion Board #9

**Discussion Board #9:** Find a recent academic or industry reading (published the present year) that discusses future trends, challenges, or innovations in public relations. The resource must relate to how PR practice is evolving in light of social media, technology, and societal impact. Write a one-paragraph summary of the key ideas or findings from the reading about the future directions of PR and if you agree or disagree with it.

> **Commented [ES35]:** Co-creation! I'll have them contribute in class and allow the conversation to be flexible to the areas that they have gravitated toward

## Weeks 13 and 14: Communicating your research

**Question we'll answer during week 13 and 14:** Why is it important for public relations professionals and researchers to effectively communicate their findings, and how can doing so increase their impact on both the field and society?

**Discussion Board #10:** If you selected the pre/debunking campaign and/or the Social/Digital Media Feature Story, please select one of the two projects and summarize it in 2–3 sentences. If you are in PRL 319 (the undergraduate section) and selected the exam option for your final, you are welcome to select any of the assignments you have produced in this class for this post. After you summarize the work you produced in 2-3 sentences, share what digital tools, platforms, or techniques were used in your research and communicating the message (e.g., Google Scholar, the library, Canva, Word, AI, etc.). In GenAI, copy and paste your summary of work and ask for it to generate three specific reasons why that research is significant and three actionable strategies for you to help make your findings more meaningful in PR and society. Report your impression of the output and if you are interested in taking part of any of the actions. Reply to at least one other peers' discussion board post to share your opinion of the AI output they received.

> **Commented [ES36]:** scaffolded - reflecting on their work and this allows for practice time to help them prepare for the actual presentation during the final classes. Reacting and responding to their peers' work also help with peer-to-peer learning

**Final Projects Due (Choose you own final! Exam, Pre/Debunk Campaign/Feature Story)**

**In-class presentations:** If you selected the pre/debunking campaign and/or the Social/Digital Media Feature Story, I'll ask you to share your projects!