

**Course Number/Title:** COMM 2962: Social Media and Society

**Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**

**Department of Communication and Media**

**Summer 2024**

**Time/Dates:** MTRF 4:00PM-6:05 PM In-Person

**Location:** FOLSOM 107

**Instructor Name:** Corinne Jones

**Title:** Assistant Professor of Scientific and Technical Communication

**Email:**

**Phone:**

**Office Hours:** MO 2:45 PM – 3:45 PM. In-Person or Zoom. If you need to meet outside of that time, please email me so that we can make alternative arrangements.

**Office Location:** Sage 4404

### **Course Description**

Social media impacts our everyday lives; it affects how we develop our sense of identity, how we communicate with others and develop relationships, and how we find information about topics, products, pop culture, and politics. Simultaneously, social media reciprocally reflects existing social dynamics. This course explores those dynamics and that reciprocal relationship. Specifically, rather than a “how-to” course, this course explores theoretical approaches to social media, including identity formation, community formation, surveillance, and digital labor.

*We will have time to work on reading and writing in class. Many of your assignments will be “scaffolded,” and we will have time to work on things in class. However, due to the accelerated nature of this class, you should be prepared to do a lot of reading and writing in this course.*

### **Objectives**

In this class, students will:

- Define key terms, issues, and debates in social and cultural analyses of social media and compare and contrast different frameworks to understand social media as media products through reading responses and academic essays.
- Examine (1) people’s situated practices on social media, including interrogating audience, purpose, content, and genre.
- Examine how (2) social media systems and infrastructures mutually shape people’s practices to understand the ways society, culture, and technology influence each other through reflective responses, and academic essays.
- Apply social and cultural frameworks and theories about social media to real-world, contemporary examples and communicate their analyses effectively through short academic essays that have clear claims and evidence.

### **Required Texts**

- All reading material will be available online, through RPI’s library, or PDFs on Blackboard.

### Other Requirements

- Please come to class with a computer, Internet access, and familiarity with computer programs and technology.
  - We will complete activities that require access to the Internet in class. If you do not have a laptop, you can [rent one from RPI](#).
- A word processing program (e.g., Microsoft Word)
- A PDF reader (e.g., Adobe Reader)
- All papers must use APA formatting.
- In-class assignments and reading comprehension questions may be turned in directly through Blackboard. Unless otherwise stated, all major assignments must be turned in using Microsoft Word (e.g., “.doc” or “.docx” file formats.)

### Grade Breakdown:

Participation and Attendance (20 required classes x 5 point each)	100 points, <b>10%</b>
Reading Responses (16 Required x 18.75 points each), <b>complete/incomplete</b>	300 points, <b>30%</b>
Library Module and APA citation quiz (15 points each)	30 points, <b>3%</b>
Peer Review, (2 Due x 70 points each)	140 points, <b>14%</b>
Midterm Paper (Analysis of Social Media practices)	200 points, <b>20%</b>
Final Paper (Analysis of Social Media systems)	200 points, <b>20%</b>
Final Reflection (1 required)	30 points, <b>3%</b>
<b>Final Grade</b>	<b>1,000 points, 100%</b>

\*There is no form of grade “resurrection” built into this grading. Rather, you have multiple small assignments so that one poor grade will not result in failure. There are no formal means to appeal grades. Extra credit will be available throughout the semester.

### Grading Scale:

A	94-100	B-	80-83	D+	67-69
A-	90-93	C+	77-79	D	64-66
B+	87-89	C	74-76	D-	60-63
B	84-86	C-	70-73	F	59 and below

If the grades are between cutoff percentages at the end of the semester, I will round the final grade up or down. If the grade is a 93.45%, I round that down to 93% for an A-. If the grade is 93.55%, I round that up to 94% for an A.

### Assignment Descriptions

#### **Attendance (20 total x 5 points each=100 points/10%. Graded on complete/incomplete).**

Since we will discuss important information in-class that will scaffold you into your major assignments, attendance and participation are crucial for this course. This semester has 22 total class periods. You may miss up to **two** total class periods without penalty. After two absences, you will lose points. **If you show up for class more than 5 minutes late, or if you leave more than 5 minutes early, you will only receive half credit.**

#### **Reading Responses (15 Due x 20 points=300 points/30% complete/incomplete).**

These are out-of-class activities in which you will respond to questions about course readings in about 250 words in a word document. They are due **before** class because we will engage with your answers in class. These are not graded on grammar or correctness. If you respond to the questions, you will receive full points. There are 17 total possible this semester, but you may skip two of your choice, *except* the days labelled “case study days.” **To be exempt from a reading response, simply upload a document to the portal saying, “I wish to take my exemption today.”** Case study reading response days are days where your reading response will ask you to find the authors’ thesis statement and what kind of evidence they use. They are meant to help you see what kinds of evidence you can use on your upcoming papers. If you complete the extra two not-required reading responses, you will receive **10 points of extra credit each**.

**Library Module: Scholarship as conversation and APA citation quiz. (30 points, 20 points and 10 points respectively)**

To understand how academic discourse works, you will complete a short (15-minute) module developed by the Liz King at RPI’s library. The module is called “Scholarship as Conversation Tutorial” (<https://guides.lib.rpi.edu/InfoLit/cocurricular>). Click on the link and watch through the videos. There is a quiz at the end. You will receive a Percipio Completion Certificate when you finish. Please download the certificate and upload it to Blackboard to receive credit.

There will also be an APA citation quiz for you in Blackboard this day. This is meant for you to practice APA citation.

**Peer Reviews (3 total x 35 points each=105 points/14%. Graded on complete/incomplete).**

For peer reviews, you will bring in nearly complete drafts of your upcoming assignments. These are meant for you to practice getting feedback from actual readers (your peers) and myself. These are also meant for you to practice putting yourself in the position of the reader. Answer the peer review questions for your peers and write 3-5 things you will change for the final draft. **You must be in class to receive points for peer review.**

**Midterm Paper (200 points, 20%).**

Your **main task** is to write a 750-1,000-word paper that (1) select a case study from social media that exemplifies at least one (at **most** two) of the topics we covered in this section of the course about people’s practices (see below for examples and restrictions). (2) Then, apply the theories that we talked about in class to your case study. To connect your case study to what we talked about in class, use **two scholarly sources** from our class.

Broadly, you are answering: **How does this case study extend existing scholarly conversations about people’s practices on social media? Why does this matter?**

**Final Paper (200 points, 20%).**

Your **main task** is to write a 750-1,000-word paper that (1) select a case study from social media that exemplifies at least one (at **most** two) of the topics we covered in this section of the course about people’s practices (see below for examples and restrictions). (2) Then, apply the theories that we talked about in class to your case study. To connect your case study to what we talked about in class, use **two scholarly sources** from our class.

Broadly, you are answering: **How does this case study extend existing scholarly conversations about social media systems? How do these systems shape and effect people’s practices?**

**Final Reflection (30 points, 3%).**

The final reflection will be completed in-class as your final exam on the last day of classes. The portal to turn in the in-class activities will open during class time and close by the end of class time. **You must be in class to receive points for in-class activities.** It will not be graded on grammar or correctness. If you complete the assignment fully, you will receive full points.

**Syllabus Statements**

**Tentative Schedule** (changes will be announced via the learning management system)

<u><b>Date and week</b></u>	<u><b>Questions/Class Activities</b></u>	<u><b>Readings and Assignments Due by class time</b></u>
<b>Introduction and Foundational Concepts</b>		
<b>Week 1:</b> Monday, May 20 Attendance 1	<b>In-Class Activity:</b> Introductions.  Quick write:  In general, why are you taking this class? it may be for credit or to fulfill a pathway, and that is fine. However, you had other courses to choose from, so why this one?  Now, please look at the syllabus. Pay attention to the course outcomes, the course description, and look ahead to the assignments. Given those outcomes, what do you expect to learn in this class?  Discuss claims, evidence, and citations.  See handouts on Claims and Evidence in BB.  Watch: <a href="#">Primary and Secondary Sources</a> .	In-class reflections:
Tuesday, May 21 Attendance 2	What is participatory culture: <a href="#">MIT (Jenkins, 1:37)</a> ( <a href="#">Oxford</a> )  <a href="#">Web 1.0, 2.0, 3.0</a> .	danah boyd, Chapter 1: Introduction in <i>It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens</i> . 2014.

	Discuss definitions of social media and networked publics and the four affordances of social media. Are these still true, or have they changed?	<b>Reading Response Questions 1</b>
<b>People's Practices</b>		
Thursday, May 23 Attendance 3	<p>Get into 4 groups.</p> <p>Discuss publicity and privacy, imagined audiences, and context collapse.</p> <p>Discuss scholarship as conversation module and APA.</p>	<p>Nancy Baym and danah boyd, "Socially mediated publicness: An Introduction" in <i>Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media</i>.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.705200">https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.705200</a>.  2012.</p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 2</b></p>
Friday, May 24	<b>Class Cancelled for RSA</b>	<p><b>Class Cancelled.</b></p> <p>Instead, take class time to do the <a href="#">Scholarship as Conversation module</a> in Percipio and turn in the Percipio Completion Certificate. (note, you may have to turn off popup blockers to access the content).</p> <p>Additionally, please complete the brief, APA citation quiz in Blackboard.</p> <p>This is due <b>AFTER</b> class time to give you time during what would be our class time to complete it.</p> <p><b>Percipio Completion Certificate and APA citation quiz due after class</b></p>
<b>Week 2:</b> Monday, May 27 <b>Identity</b>	No classes, Memorial Day	
Tuesday, May 28: <b>User practices</b>	Gloria Wang from the COMM+D presentation.	Abigail De Kosnik, "Is Twitter a stage?: Theories of

Attendance 4	<p>Discuss identity and community-building on social media.</p> <p>Discuss online harassment from <a href="#">Pew Research Center</a>.</p>	<p>Social Media Platforms as Performance Spaces” (pg. 20-35), in <i>#identity: Hashtagging race, gender, sexuality, and nation</i>. (eds. Abigail De Kosnik and Keith P. Feldman). 2019.</p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 3</b></p>
Wednesday, May 29: Attendance 5	<p>Compare refracted publics to networked publics. Do you think these characteristics hold true? Why or why not?</p> <p>Discuss online harassment from <a href="#">Pew Research Center</a>.</p>	<p>Crystal Abidin, “From “Networked Publics” to “Refracted Publics”: A Companion Framework for Researching “Below the Radar” Studies” in <i>Social Media and Society</i> DOI: 10.1177/2056305120984458. 2021.</p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 4</b></p>
Thursday, May 30 Attendance 6	<p>Discuss “technocultures” and Black Twitter. How else do people form community online?</p> <p>Discuss Peer review and case study days.</p>	<p><b>Brock</b></p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 5</b></p>
Friday, May 31: Attendance 7	<p>How do people form identities through technologies?</p> <p>Discuss: <a href="#">YouTube Radicalization Algorithm</a> .</p> <p>Discuss Peer review and case study days.</p>	<p>Aparajita Bhandari and Sara Bimo, “Why’s Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media” <i>Social Media and Society</i>, Doi: 10.1177/2056305122108624 1. 2022.</p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 6</b></p>
<b>Week 3:</b> Monday, June 3	Peer Review in class.	<b>Peer Review (due at the end of class)</b>

Attendance8		
Tuesday, June 4 Attendance9	<p><b>Case Study Days:</b> Discuss thesis statements and what types of evidence these articles use. Can you use this type of evidence for your upcoming paper?</p> <p>Second half of class: Drafting</p>	<p>Case study example days</p> <p>Catherine Knight Steele. “Black Bloggers and Their Varied Publics: The Everyday Politics of Black Discourse Online.” <i>Television &amp; New Media</i> Doi:10.1177/1527476417709535. 2018.</p> <p>Melissa Villa-Nicholas, “Latinx Digital Memory: Identity Making in Real Time” <i>Social Media and Society</i>, DOI: 10.1177/2056305119862643. 2019.</p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 7</b></p>
Thursday, June 6: Attendance10	<p><b>Case Study Days:</b> Discuss thesis statements and what types of evidence these articles use. Can you use this type of evidence for your upcoming paper?</p> <p>Second half of class: Drafting</p>	<p>Hollis Griffin. “The Politics of Merely Following: Witnessing AIDS on Instagram” <i>New Media and Society</i>. DOI: 10.1177/14614448209613. 2022.</p> <p>Annemarie Navar-Gill &amp; Mel Stanfill ""We Shouldn't Have to Trend to Make You Listen": Queer Fan Hashtag Campaigns as Production Interventions." <i>Journal of Film and Video</i>. <a href="https://muse.jhu.edu/article/701790">muse.jhu.edu/article/701790</a>. 2018.</p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 8</b></p>
Friday, June 7	<b>Paper due1 (due after class to give you time to revise in class and ask</b>	<b>Paper due1 (due after class to give you time to revise in</b>

Last day to drop in Summer II Attendance11	me last-minute questions) Looking ahead to paper 2	class and ask me last-minute questions) Looking ahead to paper 2
<b>Social media systems</b>		
<b>Week 4: Systems</b> Monday, June 10 Attendance12	Discuss how people's practices reflect sociotechnical systems.	José Van Dijck. "Chapter 1: Engineering Sociality in a culture of connectivity" in <i>The Culture of Connectivity</i> . 2013.  <b>Reading Response Questions 9</b>
Tuesday, June 11 Attendance13	Discuss interfaces and how affordances shape peoples actions. Discuss "interpellation."  Practice on an example of your choice in class.	Mel Stanfill. "The Interface as discourse: The production of norms through web design" <i>New Media and Society</i> . DOI: 10.1177/1461444814520873 2015  <b>Reading Response Questions 10</b>
Thursday, June 13 Attendance14	Discuss the political economy of social media and how companies make money. Discuss prosumption.  What does this mean for what people are incentivized to do on social media?	Christian Fuchs. "Chapter 5: The Power and Political Economy of Social Media" in <i>Social Media: A Critical introduction</i> . 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition. 2017.  You <b>ONLY</b> need to read: "Prosumption" (131) "Dallas Smythe, the audience commodity and internet prosumer commodification" (131-132). "Controversial opinions about online advertising" (133) "Advertising and Society" (134) Read: The social media-data commodity's price" (139-142), "The gendered commodity audience on social media" (142).



		<p><b>SKIP:</b> Capital Accumulation on Corporate Social Media” (134-135). <b>SKIP:</b> “the Profit rate and social media” (135-136). <b>SKIP:</b> “The rate of exploitation and social media” (136-137). <b>SKIP:</b> “The Law of value on Social Media” (137-139).</p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 11</b></p>
<p>Friday, June 14 Last day to submit Pass/No Credit for Summer term II Attendance15</p>	<p>Discuss the “like” economy and what it means to “metrify” affect. Discuss “intensification.”</p> <p>Again, what does this mean for what people are incentivized to do on social media?</p>	<p>Carolin Gerlitz and Anne Helmond. “The like economy: Social buttons and the data-intensive web” <i>New Media and Society</i>. DOI: 10.1177/1461444812472322 2013.</p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 12</b></p>
<p><b>Week 5</b> Monday, June 17 Attendance16</p>	<p>Discuss the Influencer Industry. How do people make money as influencers? How does this extend Fuchs and Gerlitz and Helmond?</p> <p>Again, what does this mean for what people are incentivized to do on social media?</p> <p>Watch: <a href="#">New Illinois law protects money children earn as social media influencers.</a></p>	<p>Emily Hund: “Chapter 2: Setting the Terms for a Transactional Industry” in <i>The Influencer Industry: the quest for authenticity on social media</i>. 2023</p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 13</b></p>
<p>Tuesday, June 18 Attendance17</p>	<p>Discuss governance of platforms and governance by platforms.</p> <p>What are the different approaches to content moderation?</p> <p>Who are the actors here?</p>	<p>Tarleton Gillespie, “Chapter 14: Regulation of and by Platforms.” In <i>The SAGE Handbook of Social Media</i>. (Eds. Jean Burgess, Alice Marwick, and Thomas Poell). 2018.</p>

	How does this shape people's practices?	<b>Reading Response Questions 14</b>
Thursday, June 20	CP	
Friday, June 21 Attendance18	CP  Discuss the different types of shadowbanning.  How does shadowbanning reflect concerns about content moderation? How does it shape people's practices?	<b>Class online on Zoom:</b>  Jaidka Kokil, Subhayan Mukerjee, and Yphtach Lelkes, "Silenced on social media: the gatekeeping functions of shadowbans in the American Twittersverse" in <i>Journal of Communication</i> . 2023. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqac050">doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqac050</a>  <b>Reading Response Questions 15</b>
<b>Week 6</b> Monday, June 24 Attendance19		<b>Peer Review</b>
Tuesday, June 25 Attendance20	<b>Case Study Days:</b>  Discuss thesis statements and what types of evidence these articles use. Can you use this type of evidence for your upcoming paper?  Second half of class: Drafting	<b><u>Case study days</u></b>  Rena Bivens, "The Gender Binary will not be deprogrammed: Ten years of coding gender on Facebook." <i>New Media &amp; Society</i> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815621527">https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815621527</a> . 2017.  Emily Tarvin and Mel Stanfill. "'YouTube's Predator Problem': Platform Moderation as Governance-Washing, and User Resistance." <i>Convergence</i> . <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565211066490">https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565211066490</a> . 2022.  <b>Reading Response Questions 16</b>
Thursday, June 27 Attendance21	<b>Case Study Days:</b>  Discuss thesis statements and what types of evidence these articles use.	<b><u>Case study days</u></b>  Enrique Zhang, "'I don't just want to look female; I want

	<p>Can you use this type of evidence for your upcoming paper?</p> <p>Second half of class: Drafting</p>	<p>to be beautiful”: theorizing passing as labor in the transition vlogs of Gigi Gorgeous and Natalie Wynn” <i>Feminist Media Studies</i>. DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2022.2041687. 2022.</p> <p>Jessica Sage Rauchberg. “Chapter 14: #Shadowbanned: Queer, trans, and disabled Creator Responses to Algorithmic Oppression on TikTok” in <i>LGBTQ Digital Cultures: A Global Perspective</i>. (Ed. Paromita Pain). DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003196457-15">10.4324/9781003196457-15</a> 2022.</p> <p><b>Reading Response Questions 17</b></p>
<p>Friday, June 28</p> <p>Attendance22</p>		<p><b>Final paper (due after class to give you time to revise in class and ask me last-minute questions)</b></p> <p><b>Final reflection (due in class)</b></p>