



# Social Media Storytelling

JRNL 3402-001

Wednesdays 3-5:30pm Armory 201

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What concerns me more than the fact that memes and visuals spread misinformation is the idea that the media industry as a whole may be falling behind agents of disinformation when it comes to fluency with the norms and practice of internet culture. This leaves many journalists and audiences vulnerable to new forms of manipulation

- An Xiao Mina, Meedan/Credibility Coalition

Apps . . . are popularizing this idea that people are comfortable talking to each other via video.

- Yvonne Leow, President, Asian American Journalists Association<sup>1</sup>

What is the role of the journalist in the 21st century?

Increasingly, the journalistic story is playing out on a variety of social media platforms, and oftentimes (as the “new normal” of daily presidential tweets), politicians and other public figures or groups are bypassing the journalist altogether and speaking to the public directly through social media. This course

<sup>1</sup>NeimanLab, “Predictions for Journalism 2018,” December 2018, <http://www.niemanlab.org/collection/predictions-2018/>

investigates the theory, ethics, and best practices in storytelling across a variety of social media platforms, including, but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube, as well as best practices for social media engagement on blogging sites like Medium. Students will develop a story for multiple platforms, and analyze the story performance on the sites, and make recommendations for best practices.

## Course Objectives

By the end of the term, students will be able to:

- Report on a story and craft a social media strategy for it using multiple platforms
- Experiment confidently in various forms of social media storytelling
- Understand best practices for established and emerging social media sites
- Develop strategies for live, disappearing, and “permanent” social media reporting
- Understand how to interpret social media analytics
- Develop a personal standard for the ethics of social media practices, include the use of click-bait headlines, reporting on viral or trending social media topics, and the spread of fake or misleading news




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### Course Readings

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Anthony Adornato, *Mobile and Social Media Journalism: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publishing, 2017).

Christian Fuchs, *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publishing, 2014).

Other readings as assigned in syllabus and available on D2L.

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## Grading Matrix and Course Assignments

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The Internet used to be something you read. In 2018, it will officially be something you watch.

- Hossein Derakhshan Journalist<sup>1</sup>

### Grade Distribution

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94-100%	A
90-93.9%	A-
87-89.9%	B+
84-86.9%	B
80-83.9%	B-
77-79.9%	C+
74-76.9%	C
70-73.9%	C-
67-69.9%	D+
64-66.9%	D
60-63.9%	D-
Below 60%	F

NOTE: Students are warned that a D in any journalism class will not deliver credit to their program of study.

### Storytelling Across Social Media Platforms

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Over the course of the term, you'll be developing a story told across multiple social media platforms, and work on smaller projects that help you to develop your social media skills. These assignments are designed to build upon one another and help you to think about responsible social media storytelling.

This assignment consists of several components, as outlined below. Each component will be graded separately.

#### Social Media Blog

Students are expect to post original stories three times to the course Medium magazine, in addition to the Social Media Story post (see below).

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<sup>1</sup>NeimanLab, "Predictions for Journalism 2018," December 2017, <http://www.niemanlab.org/collection/predictions-2018/>

- **Social Media Story Initial Blog:** A brief discussion (2-4 minute read) talking about your story idea and the feedback you received from students in class after discussing it. Due Friday after Lecture 6, 11:59pm.
- **Social Media Story Update:** A brief discussion (3-5 minute read) talking about the revisions to your story as you develop your story plan. Should incorporate ideas from readings for class as well as in-class discussions. Due March 23rd, 11:59pm.
- **Reading Think Piece:** A longer discussion (5-7 minute read) based on one of the readings for class. You will sign up for the Think Piece during the first class session. Due 5pm the Tuesday of the week the reading is due (if a reading is due 1/31, the Think Piece must be posted by 5pm on 1/30).

Because this class focuses on social media storytelling and practices, we will engage in social strategies in this assignment. You are expected to comment or highlight sections from your classmate's Medium writings weekly during the term. following these guidelines:

- You must have a total of 8 comments (1-2 minute read) and 15 highlights over the course of the term
- 2 comments must be on either an Initial Story Pitch post or a Story Update post
- 6 comments must be on Reading Think Pieces
- 5 highlights must be on either an Initial Story Pitch or Story Update post
- 10 highlights must be on Reading Think Pieces
- You cannot highlight and comment on the same post
- All comments or highlights of must be posted midnight Sunday after the original post due date

Applause on posts is optional and encouraged.

Graded on a 100 point scale: up to 15 points for each blog post, up to 5 points for each comment, 1 point for each highlight.

**Due: Throughout the term on Medium. 100 points; 15% of overall grade**

### Social Media Story Pitch

Proposals consist of the following elements: one line pitch and a one paragraph summary of the story. We'll talk about the stories in class You can choose to do one of the following story styles. The story style and topic should be identified in your pitch:

- Curation of information for an op-ed style piece on a historical or current issue (curation may need to include original interviews, depending upon the story)
- Transformation of a story you reported on for a news organization you work for (i.e. Newsteam, SportsMag, CU Independent, an internship)

- Development of a social media component for stories produced by CU News Corps
- Development of a social media strategy for an issue for a PR client

Graded on a 5 point scale: 5=excellent, 4=above average, 3=average, 2=below average, 1=poor

Due: Day before Lecture 6, 11:59pm. Via D2L dropbox. 5 points; 5% of overall grade.

### Social Media Story Plan

The proposal fleshes out the original story proposal, demonstrates that original reporting/story development has been completed, and provides a completed outline of how the story will be told on all social media platforms.

The story plan should include the following elements:

- One produced story (Facebook video, Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram stories) that is 1:45-2:00 in length
- Blogging (posted to course Medium page)
- One live element (Facebook live, YouTube live)
- Twitter (individual Tweet strategy, not a Tweet Thread)
- One experimental platform

It is expected that multiple Tweets will be completed by the time the story plan is handed in, especially surrounding key points in story development such as the Story Pitch/feedback and developments in/transformations to the story prior to the completion of the Social Media Story Plan. The story proposal should include detailed research, demonstrating that the student has significantly advanced the story beyond the original pitch. It should also indicate how the story changed during the reporting process from the initial idea and should explain how the experimental platform will be used

Feedback will consist of how to improve the story and how to optimize it for the chosen platform(s).

Graded on a 5 point scale: 5=excellent, 4=above average, 3=average, 2=below average, 1=poor

Due: March 23rd, 11:59pm. Via D2L dropbox. 5 points; 5% of overall grade.

### Tweet Thread

In lieu of class on April 11th, students will attend one session of the Conference on World Affairs and do a Tweet Thread about one of the issues raised at one of the sessions.

The Tweet Thread should:

- Include 8-12 Tweets on an issue raised by the CWA session

- Include the CWA session you're attending
- Not just recap the session, but should use the session to offer thoughts about an issue and/or questions you have after listening to the session discussion
- Be posted shortly after the conclusion of the session (within one hour) and NOT posted during the session
- Be in the proper "threaded" format (<https://twitter.com/twittersupport/status/442433903546994688?lang=en>)

Find a session to attend here: <https://www.colorado.edu/cwa/>.

Graded on a 5 point scale: 5=excellent, 4=above average, 3=average, 2=below average, 1=poor

**Due: April 13th, 11:59pm.** Be sure that I have your Twitter handle by then in the D2L dropbox or you will get a 0 on this assignment. 5 points; 5% of overall grade.

### Story Workshop

During the 13th week of class, students will meet individually with the professor for one-on-one workshops of their final projects. If students hand in any drafts, feedback will be given on them.

Graded on a 5 point scale: 5=excellent, 4=above average, 3=average, 2=below average, 1=poor

**Due: April 16th, 11:59pm.** Via D2L dropbox/in-person meeting. 5 points; 5% of overall grade.

### Story Presentation

During the final two weeks of class, students will present their story to the class, and discuss how they are telling it across various social media platforms.

Each individual presentation is expected to last 8-10 minutes. Presentations should include a summary of the main story, show the produced story, plus a demonstration of the other social media platforms you used. Students should assess what is working (to date) and where they need help. (20 points)

After the presentation, the class will be opened up to discussion of the project. Students are expected to participate in the discussions each of the days (including the presentation day), commenting on 4 other projects. (1 points per participation project, 1 points for participating in all presentation days)

**Due: April 25th-May 2nd, in class.** Schedule will be posted by April 4th. 25 points; 10% of overall grade.

## Social Media Story

The final story is due Tuesday, April 25th at the beginning of class period. It must meet the following guidelines:

- The story blog posted to the course Medium magazine.
- The story told via four additional social media platforms. These stories should be captured as downloads or screen captures and uploaded to the final project submission link in D2L.

Students can, after getting in-class feedback from their peers and professor, opt to revise the story. There is no disadvantage to doing a story revision; story will be graded on the final version identified by the student.

Projects will be graded on a score of 100, using the following grading matrix:

- Produced Story (20 points): Does the story effectively make use of the ways you can tell a story on this platform? How does the story work to increase user engagement and interest?
- Blogging Platform (15 points): Does the story effectively use the Medium platform to better contextualize the story? Does the blog offer details or insights not available in other platforms?
- Social Media Platform, Live (15 points): Does the story effectively make use of the ways you can tell a story live on this platform? How does the story work to increase user engagement and interest? Does the story exploit going live or is it just “live for live’s sake”?
- Twitter (15 points): Does the story effectively make use of the ways you can tell a story on Twitter? How does the story work to increase user engagement and interest over time?
- Experimental Platform 3 (15 points): Does the story effectively make use of the ways you can tell a story on this platform? How does the story work to increase user engagement and interest?
- Creativity (10 points): Does the project demonstrate creativity in storytelling approaches across platforms?
- Spelling/Grammar (10 points): minus 1 point for every mistake across all elements of the project (intentional word abbreviations to conform to Twitter standards do not count). 10 or more mistakes= 0 points.

**Due: April 25th, beginning of class, with an optional revision May 9th, 7pm. Via D2L dropbox. 100 points; 25% of overall grade.**

## Reflection Paper

The reflection paper is due during the final exam period. It should include the following elements:

- A discussion of how you initially conceived the project and how it transformed/ developed over the course of the term.
- A discussion of why you chose the social media platforms you did, demonstrating an engagement with and understanding of the readings that apply to your particular project design.
- A discussion of the pros and cons of the social media platforms you selected in terms of your particular story. This should include references to readings that apply to your particular project design.
- Data analytics from various social media sites to help support your analysis. If you cannot include analytics, please explain why. Charts are encouraged.
- References from term readings properly cited in text. (AP Style is fine; if you use another citation format such as APA or Chicago Style be sure it is consistent with your reference list)
- A list of references should be included at the end of the paper. (Author, Title, Date, Publication is fine; if you use another citation format such as APA or Chicago Style be sure it is consistent with your in-text citations).
- Since this is a reflection paper, writing in the first person (“I decided to use Facebook live because...”) is completely acceptable.
- The use of proper spelling and grammar is important. A paper with multiple spelling and grammar errors will receive a failing grade.
- Length: 1,500-2,000 words (5-7 pages, double spaced, not including list of references or any charts/graphics).

The final paper will be graded in letter grades as discussed below (A, A-, B+, etc.).

Due: May 9th, 7pm. Via D2L dropbox. A-F scale; 20% of overall grade.

## **Class Participation and Discussions**

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This is not a lecture class. Students are expected to attend all classes on time and participate in all class discussions.

This means having completed all readings before the assigned class date. The readings are generally industry research or thought pieces, designed to help you better design stories for specific platforms. We will also do in-class workshops based upon the readings.

I also understand that illness or emergencies, such as a death in the family or a traffic accident, may occasionally require you to miss class. You can miss up to two classes during the term for any reason with no penalty. Students who miss more than two classes will see their final grade deducted by one full grade. Students who miss more than five classes will receive an automatic failing grade. Leaving early or arriving late to three classes are the equivalent to a missed class.



If you have an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances, please see me so that we can discuss potential accommodations. For more on my illness policy, see below.

The following elements will make up your grade in this area. Each are graded separately.

### In-Class Activities

Over the course of the term we'll do in-class exercises and projects that you are expected to complete.

Due: all term. In class. 15 points; 5% of overall grade.

### Participation

Part of the storytelling process means helping your fellow students better tell their stories. That includes giving feedback, asking questions in class, and participating in guest lectures. If you do not participate on a regular basis, your final grade will be deducted by one half grade.

Due: all term. In class. 15 points; 5% of overall grade.

### Illnesses and Other Absences

#### Illness

Do not come to class sick. A single illness can be considered part of your two absences for any reason. If you have an extended illness that prevents you from coming to more than two classes, talk with me and bring a proof of illness so that we determine if any accommodation is needed.

#### Religious Observances

I understand that religious holidays may require your absence from class. Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. According to my class policy, a religious observance can be considered one of your two absences for any reason. If you know you need to return home to be with your family for a holiday, be sure to plan for that and don't miss two classes at another point in the term because you really want to go skiing.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

#### Family Emergencies

Sometimes horrible things happen in life. I understand that. According to my class policy, an unexpected emergency (death in the family, serious illness of a family member, etc.) can be considered one of your two absences for any reason. Any students who miss a class due to a family emergency above the two allowed absences will be evaluated on a case by case basis, and must provide notification of the emergency before class and documentation of the emergency upon return to class.

### University Extracurricular Activities

Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled university extracurricular activity must provide me with a travel schedule and a note from the coach/supervisor during the first week of class in order to receive an excused absence and be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Any absences up to two will be allowed, so long as the student has no other absences for any other reason. Each additional absence will be considered on an individual basis.

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## Course Calendar and Due Dates

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What surfaces on the timelines of our social media accounts can make the world seem like a divided place where people only shout from the top of their lungs – whether it is to call out the wrongs of those they disagree with or to cheer on the actions of those with whom they identify.

- Lam Thuy Vo, BuzzFeed News<sup>2</sup>

All course reading are available on the course Desire2Learn site or as links below (readings with out a link can only be found on D2L). NOTE: the calendar is subject to changes and revisions based upon current events and available speakers.

### Social Media, Journalism, and Participatory Culture

#### Lecture 1. January 17th: Introduction: Why Social Media?

Reading Due: Adornato, Chapter 1

#### Lecture 2. January 24th: Multiplatform Strategies & Ethics

Reading Due: Adornato, Chapter 2; Fuchs, Chapter 1

#### Lecture 3. January 31st: Establishing Your Brand

Reading Due: Adornato, Chapter 3; Fuchs, Chapter 2

### In the Beginning There Was Blogging...

#### Lecture 4. February 7th: Blogging and Sharing (Medium, WordPress, YouTube, Flipboard)

Reading Due: Fuchs. Chapter 3; World Economic Forum, “The Impact of Digital Content: Opportunities and Risks of Creating and Sharing Information Online.”

#### Lecture 5. February 14th Hashtags, Optimization, Analytics

Reading Due: Adornato, Chapter 6; Leleah Fernandez, “Measuring Social Media Effectiveness,” in

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<sup>2</sup>NeimanLab, “Predictions for Journalism 2018,” December 2017, <http://www.niemanlab.org/collection/predictions-2018/>

Phillip G. Clampitt, *Social Media Strategy: Tools for Professionals and Organizations* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2018), pp 175-196.

Assignment Due: Social Media Story Initial Pitch, February 20th, 11:59pm, D2L

## The Networked Ecology

### Lecture 6. February 21st: Apps and Mobile Reporting

Reading Due: Adornato, Chapter 4; Fuchs, Chapter 4; Orge Castellano, "Social Media Giants Are Hacking Your Brain — This Is How," *Medium*, December 18, 2017. <https://medium.com/@orge/your-brain-is-being-hacked-by-social-media-584ac1d2083c>.

Assignment Due: Social Media Story Initial Blog, February 23rd, 11:59pm, Medium

### Lecture 7. February 28th: Newsmakers v. News Reporters

Reading Due: Fuchs, Chapter 5; Phillip G. Clampitt, "Content," in *Social Media Strategy: Tools for Professionals and Organizations* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2018), pp 89-106.

### Lecture 8. March 7th: Video & the Importance of 1:30

Reading Due: Adornato Chapter 5, Fuchs, Chapter 7

## The Mobile Journalist

### Lecture 9. March 14th: Alternative Story Strategies

Reading Due: Fuchs, Chapter 8; John Battle, "Pinterest's Third Way," *NewCo Shift (Medium)*, January 2, 2018, <https://shift.newco.co/pinterests-third-way-a1877c5f1001>

Guest: Terron Moore, Senior Director, Social Media TRL.

### March 21st: Work Day

Assignment Due: Social Media Story Plan (D2L) and Social Media Story Update (Medium), March 23rd, 11:59pm

### March 28th: Spring Break

### Lecture 10. April 4th: Live Video and Threaded Tweets

Reading Due: Adnorato, Chapter 7; Fuchs, Chapter 11

### April 11th: Work Day

Assignment Due: Tweet Thread via Twitter, 1 hour after CWA session you attend

## Towards a Truly Social Media

April 16th-20th: Story workshop meetings scheduled

April 25th: In Class Presentations plus FCQs

Assignment Due: Social Media Story, April 25th, beginning of class, D2L

May 2nd: In Class Presentations

May 9th: Final revision/reflection paper due (10 pm) D2L

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## Course Policies

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Telling news through games isn't just a playful way of informing readers – it's also a way to create added value for publishers.

- Mariano Blejman, Grupo October/Media Factory<sup>3</sup>

Below are the specific class policies for this course. When in doubt, refer to the CU Handbook for university regulations.

### Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

### CU Honor Code

Honesty and intellectual integrity are at the heart of the learning process. It is your responsibility to read and understand the CU Honor Code.

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the academic integrity policy](#). Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office](#)

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<sup>3</sup>NeimanLab, "Predictions for Journalism 2018," December 2017, <http://www.niemanlab.org/collection/predictions-2018/>

[website](#).

## Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career.

There are many forms of plagiarism: repeating another person's sentence as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of a thesis as though it were your own. It is perfectly acceptable to use the ideas and words of other people, but we must never submit someone else's work as if it were our own, without giving appropriate credit to the originator.

Here are some specific guidelines to follow:

- Quotations. Whenever you use a phrase, sentence, or longer passage written (or spoken) by someone else, you must enclose the words in quotation marks and indicate the exact source of the material. This applies also to quotations you have altered.
- Ideas. If you use an idea or ideas that you learned from a lecture, written work, or some other source, then you should identify the source. You should identify the source for an idea whether or not you agree with the idea. It does not become your original idea just because you agree with it.

In general, all sources must be identified as clearly, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. When in doubt about whether to identify a source, either cite the source or consult your instructor.

## Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU Boulder's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual

orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy.

Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the [OIEC website](#).

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students) (www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance.

If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.