

JOMC 491/891

Room 29 | Andersen Hall
M-W 1:30-2:45 p.m.

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Welcome to the News Engagement Lab, a place where we'll be experimenting to find the best ways to engage today's distracted audience and help them find the important news that they need to know.

Digital news engagement is a relatively recent concept – so we'll be on the cutting edge of research and practice. The hope is that from our research and experimentation this semester, we can begin to develop additional insights into how news organizations and others can best to engage their digital audiences.

In this hands-on course, you will create, implement and analyze audience engagement strategies for news projects produced by [NET](#) and the CoJMC [Mosaic website](#). You will study the engagement practices of news organizations and learn how to use both social media and traditional methods to engage a variety of audiences.

This course will cover the following topics: social media for engagement, including news engagement case studies and best practices; audience analysis (including social listening) and research; testing, tracking, measurement and analytics; creative thinking processes; working in teams; and report and proposal writing.

Knowledge of and experience in social media content creation, engagement, social listening and analytics will open up additional job opportunities for you. Employers are eager to hire individuals who know how to plan, execute, monitor and measure engagement opportunities through both traditional methods and social media.

This is an elective course that is open to all CoJMC majors with the hope that a mix of majors can create a classroom environment in which students can be inspired by and learn from each other.

Learning objectives

To research, develop, create and oversee effective and measurable engagement strategies for news outlets, we will focus on the following learning objectives:

- Research and analyze audiences – including niche and diverse audiences – to determine the best way to engage them;

- Understand and practice how to use social media for engagement;
- Study how news organizations and others use engagement strategies to successfully engage audiences;
- Study and practice how to use a variety of analytical tools to analyze engagement strategies to determine effectiveness;
- Study and practice creative and design thinking processes;
- Practice how to clearly communicate ideas and persuade others to adopt them;

Student expectations

Follow these and you'll have a much richer and rewarding educational experience:

Be creative and innovative and do not be afraid to take risks with your testing, content creation, ideas and strategies. The course is called a lab because it is a place of experimentation. It is OK to try and fail.

Be a good team member. Much of the work in the class will be done in teams. Don't be the slacker or undependable team member.

Give your full attention. I work hard to create engaging and interesting lectures and in-class activities, including arranging for guest speakers. In return, I ask that you give your full attention to me, guest speakers and your fellow students at all times. At the beginning of each class, I will give a signal that means all laptops must be closed, all desk computers off and all phones turned off. Please abide by this so you and your neighbors will not be distracted and can focus on any presentations, exercises and discussions.

We will be using the computers in the class, but only during designated times. If you want to take notes during class, which I strongly suggest, I encourage you to use paper notebooks.

Come to class fully prepared. When readings or videos are assigned, you should have carefully read them (or watched them) and be prepared to elaborate on main points during class discussions. I'm not planning to require reading quizzes, but if it becomes apparent that you aren't reading the material before class, I may institute quizzes.

Course requirements

While there is no required textbook, you will have weekly required readings from a supplemental list I have compiled.

Please have personal accounts opened in all of these as soon as possible:

- Google Drive
- Twitter

- Facebook
- Diigo – a social bookmarking site.
- HootSuite or TweetDeck
- Tumblr

Here is a breakdown of how we will use these and other programs:

Blackboard – Where you can find assignment details, assignment rubrics and the syllabus. You will upload most assignments to Blackboard. If you don't know how to properly upload an assignment to Blackboard, please watch the tutorial on Blackboard. You also will need to use Blackboard to access some of the readings. Click on the Library Readings tab on the left side of the Blackboard course home page.

GoogleDrive – you will be compiling group notes and reports here. Some assignments may also be uploaded here as well as course resources.

Diigo – we will be using a class group on this social bookmarking site to help you stay organized with any research we come across.

HootSuite or TweetDeck – you will be monitoring audiences and feeds.

Tumblr – you will be following and/or researching the NPR Social Media Desk blog: <http://socialmediadesk.tumblr.com/>

Email newsletter – sign up for [Melody Joy Kramer's](#)

Opportunities to learn

You will learn through lecture, discussion, reading, hands-on activities, exercises and assignments.

Major assignments will include:

- Audience analysis research assignment for a series of NET stories on homelessness. We will be using state-of-the-art monitoring software for this assignment, which will be done in groups.
- Social media creation and A/B testing assignments for Mosaic and NET. Some assignments will be done individually and some will be done in groups.
- Strategy project (final project). You will develop comprehensive engagement strategies – both pre-reporting and post-production – for two NET long-range news projects. This assignment will be done in groups. The plan is to present these to NET news and marketing staff.

Other regular assignments or exercises:

- Reflections. You will be asked to reflect specifically on the readings, lectures and work you did for the major assignments. For the reflections you will do on the readings, lectures and class discussions, I will be expecting you to start making connections between what you have read, what we have discussed in class and the class work you are doing. These typically will be one page and will contain questions you will need to answer. For the reflections you will do for the major assignments, you will be asked to reflect on your performance.
- Progress reports and final reports. We will be documenting everything we do in some form or another.

Graduate students will complete additional, research-related work to fulfill the graduate portion of this class, worth 20 percent of your grade. Together we'll identify something you'd like to study and discuss your research methods, which could include interviews, lit reviews, content analyses or surveys. The final product will be a 10- to 15-page paper that you will present to the class. You must complete that work satisfactorily to pass the course. A written proposal describing what you want to study should be turned into the instructor by Feb. 22, and your project will be due April 28.

Grading

Most assignments, reflections and exercises will have a posted rubric (on Blackboard) with grading criteria so you will know what is expected. You will earn letter grades for all your work based on the following:

- 15 percent for reflections
- 20 percent for project updates and other exercises
- 30 percent for major assignments
- 35 percent for engagement strategy project

Course grading scale

A+ = 97-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69
A = 94-96	B = 84-86	C = 74-76	D = 64-66
A- = 90-93	B- = 80-83	C- = 70-73	D- = 60-63 F = 59/below

Attendance policy

You are expected to attend every class. Two unexcused absences will severely affect your grade, so please, talk to me when you must miss a class. Obviously, serious illness or family emergencies are legitimate reasons for not attending, but try when possible to let me know ahead of time. If you are going to miss a class, it is your responsibility to:

- Notify me

- Make-up the missed assignments. Please note that your grade may drop for late assignments.

Please be on time to class. We have a lot of material to cover, and I try to start each class promptly. Being late is unprofessional. It also is rude to me and others when you arrive late and interrupt the class.

ACEJMC competencies

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). This course addresses the following ACEJMC competencies:

1. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the journalism profession, audience and purposes students serve;
2. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work;
3. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
4. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
5. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
6. Think critically, creatively and independently.

Academic integrity

In this college, we take ethics very seriously. As an aspiring journalist, you are expected to demonstrate integrity and follow the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics. In the classroom, that means also following the UNL Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the UNL Bulletin. Plagiarism generally results in firing in the journalism profession. Students who plagiarize or fabricate material may receive a failing grade on an assignment or for an entire course and may be reported to the Student Judicial Review Board. The work a student submits in a class must be the student's own work and must be work completed for that particular class and assignment. Students wishing to build on an old project or work on a similar project in two classes must discuss this with both professors.

Academic dishonesty includes:

- Handing in another's work or part of another's work as your own.
- Fabricating quotes, interviews or other material for any content you submit in this class.
- Turning in one of your old papers (including something you wrote in high school) for a current class.
- Turning in the same or similar paper for two different classes.
- Using notes or other study aids or otherwise obtaining another's answers for a quiz or an examination.

Anything and everything you include in your papers that comes from another source must be attributed with proper citation. That includes ideas and opinions. Plagiarism consists of using phrases, sentences or paragraphs from any source and republishing them without alteration or attribution. The sources include, but are not limited to, books, magazines, newspapers, television or radio reports, websites and other students' papers.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Diversity

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications values diversity, in the broadest sense of the word – gender, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, income, religion, education, geographic, physical and mental ability or disability, sexual orientation. We recognize that understanding and incorporating diversity in the curriculum enables us to prepare our students for careers as professional communicators in a global society. As communicators, we understand that journalism, advertising and other forms of strategic communication must reflect society in order to be effective and reliable. We fail as journalists if we are not accurate in our written, spoken and visual reports; including diverse voices and perspectives improves our accuracy and truthfulness. In advertising, we cannot succeed if we do not understand the value of or know how to create advertising that reflects a diverse society and, thus, appeals to broader audiences.

Course schedule

(Warning: This is subject to change; additional exercises and readings may be added and due dates may be changed. If this happens, I will alert you and post a revised schedule to Blackboard. Due dates for other assignments will be announced in class and on Blackboard.)

Date	Topic(s)	Reading	Reflections/Assignments
Mon., Jan. 11	Course overview; What is engagement?	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement: Buttry • Engagement: Mayer 	
Wed., Jan. 13	Audience analysis and research	Reading for next class period (Jan. 20): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building listening for newsrooms • Pew study • Audience analysis study (Twitter) • How Chalkbeat is building an audience. 	
Mon., Jan. 18	NO CLASS: MLK Day		
Wed., Jan. 20	Audience analysis and research	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with diverse audiences • Guide to crowdsourcing (Read Parts 1, 3, 5 and 8.1) 	Upload to Blackboard by class time: reflection over <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building listening for newsrooms • Pew study • Audience analysis study (Twitter) • How Chalkbeat is building an audience.
Mon., Jan. 25	Audience analysis and research	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Batsell, Chapter 2 (Library readings on Blackboard) • NPR Facebook engagement • 25 most engaged brands on Twitter 	

Wed., Jan. 27	<p>Audience analysis and research</p> <p>Creating engaging content on social channels</p>	<p>Reading for next class period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPR: Social media graphics • NPR callouts 	<p>Upload to Blackboard by class time: reflection over</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with diverse audiences • Guide to crowdsourcing • Batsell, Chap. 2
Mon., Feb. 1	<p>Creating engaging content on social channels</p>	<p>Reading for next class period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 killer social ideas • Visual content 	
Wed., Feb. 3	<p>Creating engaging content on social channels</p>	<p>Reading for next class period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BP: Zamora 	
Mon., Feb. 8	<p>Creating engaging content on social channels</p>	<p>Reading for next class period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posting frequency 	
Wed., Feb. 10	<p>Creating engaging content on social channels</p>	<p>Reading for next class period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upworthy testing 	
Mon., Feb. 15	<p>Testing and tracking</p>		
Wed., Feb 17	<p>Testing and tracking</p>	<p>Reading for next class period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metrics, metrics everywhere • Think audiences 	
Mon., Feb. 22	<p>Testing and tracking</p> <p>Analytics</p>	<p>Reading for next class period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic factories 	<p>Graduate research paper proposal due.</p>

Wed., Feb. 24	Analytics	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Batsell, Chapter 5 	Upload to Blackboard by class time: reflection over <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metrics, metrics everywhere Think audiences Traffic factories
Mon., Feb. 29	Creative and design thinking; working in teams	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BP: Public broadcasting report (read section on “Best Practices and Examples”) 	
Wed., March 2	Creative and design thinking; working in teams	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millennials and news 	Upload to Blackboard by class time: reflection over <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Batsell, Chap. 5 BP: Public broadcasting report
Mon., March 7	Engagement strategies/best practices	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millennials: best practices 	
Wed., March 9	Engagement strategies/best practices		Upload to Blackboard by class time: reflection over <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millennials and news Millennials: best practices
Mon., March 14	Engagement strategies/best practices	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BP: BuzzFeed 	Progress report on strategy project due at class time.
Wed., March 16	Engagement strategies/best practices	Reading for next class period (March 28): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online polls and quizzes 	Upload to Blackboard by class time: reflection over <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BP: BuzzFeed
Mon., March 21	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK		

Wed., March 23	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK		
Mon., March 28	Engagement strategies/best practices	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BP: Growth editors • BP: Kramer 	
Wed., March 30	Engagement strategies/best practices	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment study • Comment section roundup 	Upload to Blackboard by class time: reflection over <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BP: Growth editors • BP: Kramer
Mon., April 4	Engagement in the comments section	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mood meters • Predictions: Comments 	
Wed., April 6	Engagement in the comments section	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predictions: Engagement • Predictions: Community 	
Mon., April 11	Issues in engagement		
Wed., April 13	Issues in engagement	Reading for next class period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You Gotta Read This 	Upload to Blackboard by class time: reflection over <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predictions: Engagement • Predictions: Community
Mon., April 18	Ethics		Strategy project due at class time
Wed., April 20	Verification		
Mon., April 25	Presentation of strategy project		

Wed., April 27	Presentation of strategy project		
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