

# COM 525: Social Media Analytics & Strategy



**Shippensburg University, Fall 2024 (Oct. 21-Dec. 13)**

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This course is **100% online**. Most instruction will be asynchronous, using the university's course management system, Desire2Learn (D2L) Brightspace (<https://d2l.ship.edu>). However, there also will be **three required synchronous meetings via Zoom (all times are Eastern)**:

- **Tuesday, Oct. 22**, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- **Tuesday, Nov. 12**, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- **Tuesday, Dec. 10**, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

**Zoom link:** <https://ship.zoom.us/j/97387490830> ♦ **Passcode:** 525 ♦ **Meeting ID:** 973 8749 0830

## Student consultation hours

**In-person (Rowland 123):** Mondays and Wednesdays, 1-1:30 and 3-4 p.m.;

Sign up at: <https://calendly.com/krheim/officehours>

**Online via Zoom:** Tuesdays, 1-3 p.m.; Sign up at: <https://calendly.com/krheim/zoomhours>

If none of the available times works for you, please email me, and we can arrange a different time.

## Required courseware

You must purchase access to **Social Media Simternship**, a web-based social media simulation program. It is available from Stukent for **\$69.99**. You will begin using the simulation in Week 4 (the week of Nov. 11).

**Purchase Social Media Simternship and set up your account at this link:** <https://join.stukent.com/join/E6E-74B>

Please use your Ship email address when creating your account.



## Course overview

### Course description

This course teaches you how to leverage social media for strategic communication purposes. You will gain hands-on experience creating social media content and using various methods and tools for collecting, interpreting, and presenting analytical data from social media platforms. You will use insights gained from the data to formulate social media strategies and provide actionable recommendations.

### Course objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Develop social media strategies that align with organizational goals and objectives.
- Create effective organic and paid social media content to build relationships with key publics.
- Use influencer marketing campaigns for promotional purposes.
- Identify key performance indicators to measure the success of social media campaigns and initiatives.
- Analyze social media data using platform-specific analytics and industry-standard tools.
- Effectively communicate social media insights and recommendations in a professional and ethical manner.

### Professional competencies

In its guidelines for Certification in Education for Public Relations (CEPR), the Commission on Public Relations Education recommends that graduate curricula in public relations address several content areas. The content areas addressed in this course are indicated in bold:

- **Strategic public relations management, best practices in a digital environment**, crisis communication, risk communication, and written and **oral communication skills**
- Basic business principles and processes
- Communications/public relations theory and research methods
- Ethics (ethical and legal issues)
- Global influences on the practice of public relations (understanding of cross-cultural and intercultural communications, and public relations practices worldwide)

## Academic honesty, plagiarism and use of AI

### Academic dishonesty policy

Students are expected to complete individual and original work for this class. Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be handled according to the university's [Academic Dishonesty Policy](#). All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the department, the Dean's Office and the Office of Student Affairs. Penalties for violation of the Academic Dishonesty Policy include grade reduction, assignment of a failing grade for the course, suspension and expulsion from the University.

### Use of ChatGPT and other forms of artificial intelligence (AI)

Generative artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT and other Large Language Models or "chatbots" can be great tools for brainstorming ideas and answering some simple questions. They are not search engines or research tools, however, and the information they provide is often fabricated or inaccurate. **Submitting work in this course containing content that was wholly or partially produced or edited by ChatGPT**

**or other forms of AI, unless you are explicitly instructed to do so, is a form of academic dishonesty and will be treated as such,** in accordance with the university's Academic Dishonesty Policy. Assignments in this course may be analyzed using multiple AI and plagiarism detection tools.

## Coursework and course structure

### Course format

**D2L site:** All course materials will be posted to the course D2L site. It is your responsibility to check the site regularly and make sure you are completing all work by the specified deadlines. Clicking "Content" in the menu bar at the top of the D2L site will bring up a vertical listing of modules, organized by week. Clicking on a weekly module will bring up a listing of submodules containing all the materials for the week. Some material will be posted in advance, but other material may not be available in D2L until the week in which it is listed on the syllabus.

**Videos:** Most weekly modules will contain one or more short videos previewing the week's tasks, introducing key concepts and providing general guidance. Please watch any videos before completing the other work for the week.

**Reading:** Each week will include assigned reading relevant to the topics and assignments of the week. Web links to the readings are provided in the schedule at the end of this syllabus and in the weekly D2L modules.

**HubSpot Social Media Marketing certification:** Create a free HubSpot account during the first week of the course (you will receive an invitation sent to your Ship email address) and enroll in HubSpot's Social Media Marketing certification. The certification provides online training in social media strategy, social media listening and monitoring, digital advertising, measuring return on investment and more. **You must complete the training during the first three weeks of the term (several modules are assigned each week) and take the online certification exam no later than 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 15.**

The online certification exam contains 70 multiple-choice questions, which you must answer one at a time. You will have up to 3 hours to complete the exam. If you answer at least 53 of the questions correctly (75% or better), you will be awarded the certificate. You may retake the exam as many times as you wish, but you must wait at least 12 hours between attempts. **Your exam score (as of 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 15) will count toward your course grade, plus you will be awarded 30 additional points if you successfully completed all the training modules.**

**Social Media Simternship simulation:** Beginning in Week 4 (week of Nov. 11), you will use Social Media Simternship, a web-based social media strategy simulation. You will begin in the role of social media specialist for Buhi Supply Co. (a fictitious e-commerce retailer specializing in backpacks, purses, satchels and duffel bags) and earn promotions along the way. You will create organic and paid social media content and influencer marketing campaigns, working within a specified budget.

**The simulation consists of 10 rounds** (3 rounds of organic posts, 3 rounds of paid posts, 3 rounds of influencer marketing, and a concluding round combining all the tactics). You will receive instructions from your supervisor and additional tasks from me in a separate strategy memo. In each round, you will respond to questions from customers, and plan and execute a social media strategy. At the end of each round, you will track the success of your efforts according to several key performance indicators (KPIs) and see where you rank among your classmates. You will be graded on your performance.

**Scoring in Rounds 1-3 (Organic media):** You may earn up to 10 points per round based on the number of impressions generated in each round. Only your two highest round scores will count; your lowest round score will be dropped. Additionally, you may earn up to 10 points based on total revenue

generated in the simulation at the end of Round 3.

**Scoring in Rounds 4-6 (Paid media):** You may earn up to 10 points per round based on a different KPI in each round: impressions for Round 4, engagements for Round 5, and conversions for Round 6. Only your two highest round scores will count; your lowest round score will be dropped. Additionally, you may earn up to 10 points based on total revenue generated in the simulation at the end of Round 6.

**Scoring in Rounds 7-9 (Influencer marketing):** You may earn up to 10 points per round based on the number of conversions generated in each round. Only your two highest round scores will count; your lowest round score will be dropped. Additionally, you may earn up to 10 points based on total revenue generated in the simulation at the end of Round 9.

**Scoring in Round 10 (Conclusion):** You may earn up to 30 points in this round based on your performance on three KPIs — 10 points each for impressions, engagements and conversions. Additionally, you may earn up to 10 points based on total revenue generated in the simulation at the end of Round 10.

**Scoring system:** Your scores will be determined by your rank among your classmates: Roughly the top third of the class will earn 10 points; the next third of the class, 9 points; and the bottom third of the class, 8 points. However, I will look at how the data cluster when awarding points. For example, if everyone in the class generates nearly the same number of conversions in a round, I may award 10 points to the entire class in that round. I reserve the right to award less than 8 points for work is not unsatisfactory, doesn't meet minimum standards, or doesn't follow instructions. If you do not complete a round by the deadline, you will earn 0 points for that round.

**Extra credit:** The three students who generate the most total revenue in the simulation (based on the final revenue totals after Round 10) **will be awarded 10 extra-credit bonus points**.

**Final report:** At the end of the simulation, you will deliver a **final report** (worth up to 70 points) to the Buhi board of directors in the form of a video with accompanying slides, summarizing the social media strategies and tactics you used, evaluating the success of your posts and campaigns, and providing strategic insights and recommendations for the company going forward.

**Social media audit:** In this assignment (worth up to 50 points), you will conduct a social media audit for a business or organization, summarizing and evaluating its usage of social media across multiple platforms.

**Analytics exercise:** In this exercise (worth up to 50 points), you will engage in some social listening and monitoring, using analytic data tracked and compiled in Keyhole, a web-based social media analytics platform, to generate insights.

**NOTE: All assignments must be completed by the deadlines to earn credit.** Failure to take the HubSpot Social Media Marketing certification exam by the deadline will result in a score of 0. Simternship rounds not completed by the deadline will earn 0 points. For written assignments (the social media audit and analytics exercise), deadline extensions are granted only in exceptional cases. Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.

## Grading and evaluation

Grades will be recorded on the course D2L site. A total of **400 points** are available during the term. Point totals at the end of the term will be converted into letter grades:

Point Total	Grade
372 – 400 (93%)	A
360 – 371.5 (90%)	A-
348 – 359.5 (87%)	B+
332 – 347.5 (83%)	B

Point Total	Grade
320 – 331.5 (80%)	B-
300 – 319.5 (75%)	C+
280 – 299.5 (70%)	C
240 – 279.5 (60%)	D

Point Total	Grade
0 – 239.5	F

A breakdown of the course assignments and corresponding point values:

<b>HubSpot Social Media Marketing Certification (100 points)</b>	
Completion of all training modules by noon Tuesday, Nov. 12	30 points
Certification exam score – due 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 15	70 points
<b>Social Media Simternship Simulation (200 points)</b>	
Top two scores in Rounds 1-3 (Organic Social Media)	20 points
Revenue total after Round 3	10 points
Top two scores in Rounds 4-6 (Paid Social Media)	20 points
Revenue total after Round 6	10 points
Top two scores in Rounds 7-9 (Influencer Marketing)	20 points
Revenue total after Round 9	10 points
Scores in Rounds 10 (Conclusion)	30 points
Revenue total after Round 10	10 points
Extra credit for 3 students who generate the most total revenue	(10 bonus points)
Final report – due by 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 13	70 points
<b>Other Assignments (100 points)</b>	
Social media audit – due by noon Tuesday, Nov. 5	50 points
Analytics exercise – due by noon Tuesday, Nov. 12	50 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>400 points</b>

## Communication and technology

### Email communication

In addition to checking the D2L site, please check your Ship email account every day. I frequently use email to communicate important class information. When corresponding with me by email, please use your Ship account, include a subject line and always mention that the email is regarding this course.

### Keeping copies of assignments and emails

Keep an electronic copy of all assignments and course-related email messages. Do not delete any course-related files or emails until you receive your final grade at the end of the term. If there are questions about assignments, you may be asked to produce the original emails and files.

### Technology help

I am happy to answer any questions regarding course content and assignments, but technical questions should be addressed to people who are much more knowledgeable about the technology:

**General information:** More information about technology resources at Ship is available [at this site](#).

**D2L assistance:** If you need technical assistance with the D2L system, contact the SU Student Helpdesk at (717) 477-HELP (x4357) or [helpdesk@ship.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ship.edu). After hours, you may contact D2L Technical Support at [helpdesk@d2l.com](mailto:helpdesk@d2l.com) or (866) 832-2319.

**Social Media Simternship technical assistance:** If you're experiencing technical problems with the Simternship website, you may email [support@stukent.com](mailto:support@stukent.com) or call (855) 788-5368.



## University resources and policies

### Graduate Writing Center

The Shippensburg University Graduate Writing Center helps students become more confident, effective writers and believes that all writers benefit from sharing writing with an interested reader. Graduate consultants work alongside graduate writers to offer collaborative writing consultations in a low-stakes environment. Highly trained consultants guide sessions to fit writers' goals at any stage of the writing process—from brainstorming ideas, developing an argument, revising drafts, improving clarity, to citing and documenting sources. Three appointment options provide scheduling flexibility for your busy schedule: in-person consultations, synchronous consultations via Zoom, and asynchronous sessions that provide written comments, a recorded video that explains feedback, and guidance for revision. For more information, visit the [Graduate Writing Center website](#).

### Accessibility resources

Shippensburg University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. The University welcomes all students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs and strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR) to discuss specific needs. OAR is located in Mowrey Hall 252 and can be reached by phone at (717) 477-1364 or via email at [oar@ship.edu](mailto:oar@ship.edu).

### Student support resources

More information about the support services that Ship offers to students, including academic support, professional support, physical health, mental health and spiritual health resources, can be found [here](#).

### Title IX - Commitment to a safe learning environment

Shippensburg University and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to comply with the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the university's commitment to offering supportive measures in accordance with the regulations issued under Title IX, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the university's Title IX Coordinator, Dr. John Burnett ([JABurnett@ship.edu](mailto:JABurnett@ship.edu)) or [Title9@ship.edu](mailto:Title9@ship.edu). The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing assignment for a class, or as part of a university-approved research project. Faculty members are obligated to report sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred to the person designated in the university's Protection and Supervision of Minors on Campus Policy.

Information on the reporting of sexual violence and the resources available to victims of sexual violence are available on the [Office of Human Resources site](#).

Link for the online reporting form: (This is for reporting an issue, not making a formal complaint)  
[https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?ShippensburgUniv&layout\\_id=3](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?ShippensburgUniv&layout_id=3)

Link for the formal complaint form:  
[https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?ShippensburgUniv&layout\\_id=21](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?ShippensburgUniv&layout_id=21)

Link for campus resources: [https://www.ship.edu/about/offices/hr/title\\_ix\\_statement/resources/](https://www.ship.edu/about/offices/hr/title_ix_statement/resources/)

## Tentative course schedule

This schedule is subject to change. Changes will be announced via email and D2L. Please see each week's D2L module for the full list of materials for the week.

### WEEK 1 (Oct. 21-27): Listening, Planning and Strategizing

➤ **Zoom meeting: Tuesday, Oct. 22, at 6:30 p.m.**

- Introducing yourself, introduction to the course
- **Zoom link:** <https://ship.zoom.us/j/97387490830>
- **Passcode:** 525
- **Meeting ID:** 973 8749 0830

➤ **Week 1 video (posted to D2L)**

➤ **HubSpot Academy Social Media Marketing Certification**

- **Set up HubSpot account** (Follow the instructions in the invitation email sent to your Ship email address. Also see the pdf file posted in this week's module on the D2L site for further instructions.)
- **Complete these training modules (about 2 hours) by noon Tuesday, Oct. 29:**
  - **Welcome to the Social Media Certification**
  - **Developing a Social Media Strategy**
  - **Social Media Listening and Monitoring**

➤ **Reading (links also posted on D2L)**

- Colleen Christison, "What is Social Listening: How to Better Understand Your Audience," *Hootsuite*, Sept. 17, 2024. ([link](#))
- Therese Nguyen, "4 Social Listening Examples from Brands Doing It Right," *RivalIQ*, Aug. 11, 2023. ([link](#))
- "Social Media Marketing Strategy: Eight Easy Steps to Develop Your Social Media Presence," *Hootsuite*. ([link](#))

➤ **Key terminology**

- buyer persona, SMART goals, KPIs, vanity metrics, reach, engagement, return on investment (ROI), retention and loyalty, sentiment, five social media team structures (decentralized, centralized, hub and spoke, dandelion, holistic), social listening vs. social monitoring, social media audit, social media content calendar, 80-20 rule, rule of thirds

## WEEK 2 (Oct. 28-Nov. 3): Content Strategy and Creation

- **NO Zoom meeting**
- **Week 2 video (posted to D2L)**
- **HubSpot Academy Social Media Marketing Certification**
  - **Complete training modules (about 2½ hours) by noon Tuesday, Nov. 5:**
    - **Building a Content Strategy for Social Media**
    - **Social Media Calendar Template Tutorial**
    - **Extending Your Reach on Social Media**
    - **Using Social Media to Build One-on-One Relationships**
- **Reading (links also posted on D2L)**
  - “Create Engaging and Effective Social Media Content,” *Hootsuite*, July 30, 2024 ([link](#))
  - Kevan Lee, “How to Find Your Social Media Marketing Voice: The Best Examples, Questions and Guides,” *Buffer*, April 14, 2014. ([link](#))
- **Key terminology**
  - real-time marketing or newsjacking, influencer content, user-generated content (UGC), tone vs. voice, campaigns, hashtags, calls-to-action (CTA), tagging, content curation, influencer marketing, celebrity influencers, industry influencers, microinfluencers, the three factors that determine how easily influencers can impact behavior (reach, relevance, and resonance), crowdsourcing, earned media, push channel, social customer service (or social care), service level agreement (SLA), social selling
- **Assignment: Social media audit**
  - **Due to D2L by noon Tuesday, Nov. 5**



## WEEK 3 (Nov. 4-10): Analytics and Measurement

- **NO Zoom meeting**
- **Week 3 video (posted to D2L)**
- **HubSpot Academy Social Media Marketing Certification**
  - **Complete remaining training modules (about 2 hours) by noon Tuesday, Nov. 12:**
    - **Introduction to Social Media Advertising**
    - **Measuring Your Social Return on Investment**
    - **Essentials for Continued Success with Social Media**
- **Reading (links also posted on D2L)**
  - “Social Media Analytics: The Complete Guide,” *Emplifi*, Jan. 15, 2024. ([link](#))
  - Jamia Kenan, “Reach vs. Impressions: What’s the Difference in Terms?” *Sprout Social*, Feb. 20, 2024. ([link](#))
  - Chloe West, “The 21 Essential Social Media Metrics You Must Track for Success in 2024,” *Hootsuite*, Oct. 3, 2024. ([link](#))
- **Key terminology**
  - types of advertising audiences (core audiences, custom audiences, and lookalike audiences), Facebook’s key metrics to rate expected performance of ads (quality, engagement, and conversion), return on investment (ROI), social media audit, social media policy, three stages of a social media crisis (preparation, response, recovery), crisis plan, employee advocacy program, social media analytics, reach, impressions, audience growth rate, engagement rate, amplification rate, click-through rate (CTR), conversion rate, social share of voice, social sentiment
- **Assignment: Analytics exercise**
  - **Due to D2L by noon Tuesday, Nov. 12.**

## WEEK 4 (Nov. 11-17): Organic Content

- **Zoom meeting: Tuesday, Nov. 12, at 6:30 p.m.**
  - Be prepared to discuss analytics assignment; preparation for Social Media Simternship
  - **Zoom link:** <https://ship.zoom.us/j/97387490830>
  - **Passcode:** 525
  - **Meeting ID:** 973 8749 0830
  
- **Week 4 video (posted to D2L)**
  
- **Assignment: HubSpot Academy Social Media Marketing Certification**
  - **Complete Social Media Certification Exam by 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 15.**
  
- **Reading (links also posted on D2L)**
  - Hannah Macready, “Organic vs. Paid Social Media: Differences and Strategic Tips,” *Hootsuite*, April 15, 2024. ([link](#))
  - Christina Newberry, “Here’s What You Can Do About Organic Reach Decline in 2024,” *Hootsuite*, Aug. 1, 2023. ([link](#))
  
- **Key terminology**
  - organic social media, paid social media, A/B testing, lookalike audiences, algorithms, organic reach, paid reach
  
- **Assignment: Social Media Simternship**
  - **Complete Introduction and Round 1 (Organic Content) by 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 15.**
  - **Complete Rounds 2 and 3 (Organic Content) by noon Tuesday, Nov. 19.**
  - **Read the Strategy Memo posted in D2L for a list of additional tasks to complete in Rounds 1-3, plus some tips to help you succeed in these rounds.**

## WEEK 5 and 6 (Nov. 18-Dec. 1): Paid Content

- **NO Zoom meeting**
- **Week 5 video (posted to D2L)**
- **Reading (links also posted on D2L)**
  - “Social Media Advertising: How It Works and Tips for Success,” *Sprout Social*, May 2, 2023. ([link](#))
  - Laura Moore, “11 Facebook Ads Campaign Objectives and When to Use Them,” *Social Media Examiner*, June 8, 2021. ([link](#)) – **NOTE:** This reading will help you select the appropriate influencer marketing objectives in the Simternship rounds.
- **Key terminology**
  - Facebook Ads campaign objectives (brand awareness, reach, traffic, engagement, app installs, video views, lead generation, messages, conversions, catalog sales, store traffic)
- **Assignment: Social Media Simternship, including reflection**
  - **Complete Round 4 (Paid Content) by 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 22**
  - **Complete Rounds 5 and 6 (Paid Content) by noon Tuesday, Nov. 26**
  - **Read the Strategy Memo posted in D2L for a list of additional tasks to complete in Rounds 4-6, plus some tips to help you succeed in these rounds.**

## WEEK 7 (Dec. 2-8): Influencer Marketing

### ➤ NO Zoom meeting

### ➤ Week 7 video (posted to D2L)

### ➤ Reading (links posted on D2L)

- Christina Newberry and Eileen Kowk, “Influencer Marketing Guide: How to Work With Influencers,” *Hootsuite*, Oct. 25, 2023. ([link](#))
- Ann-Derrick Gaillot, “11 Examples of the Best Influencer Marketing Campaigns,” *Meltwater*, Jan. 24, 2024. ([link](#))

### ➤ Key terminology

- nano-influencers, micro-influencers, macro-influencers, mega-influencers, UTM parameters, different types of influencer marketing campaigns (sponsored posts, contests and giveaways, account takeovers, brand ambassadorships, affiliate marketing, unboxings/reviews, pre-release content, collaborations, event activations)

### ➤ Assignment: Social Media Simternship

- **Complete Round 7 (Influencer Marketing) by 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6**
- **Complete Rounds 8-9 (Influencer Marketing) and Round 10 (Conclusion) by noon Tuesday, Dec. 10**
- **Read the Strategy Memos posted in D2L for a list of additional tasks to complete in Rounds 7-9 and Round 10, plus some tips to help you succeed in these rounds.**

## WEEK 8 (Dec. 9-13): Artificial Intelligence; Final Report Due

- **Zoom meeting: Tuesday, Dec. 10, at 6:30 p.m.**
  - **Final meeting:** Discussion of Social Media Simternship experience, final report due Friday, course-wrap up
  - **Zoom link:** <https://ship.zoom.us/j/97387490830>
  - **Passcode:** 525
  - **Meeting ID:** 973 8749 0830
  
- **Reading (links posted on D2L)**
  - Clodagh O'Brien, "AI in Social Media," *Digital Marketing Institute*, May 1, 2024. ([link](#))
  - Shubham Gupta and Aishwarya Suresh, "ChatGPT for Social Media: 7 Best Use Cases," *Sprinklr*, May 7, 2024. ([link](#))
  
- **Assignment: Social Media Simternship final report**
  - **Final report submitted to D2L by 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 13**