



COMM/SM 310 - Social Media, Social Food

Course Syllabus

Spring Semester 2025

Instructor: Alessandro Zaccaro

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: None

Class Meeting Days & Time: Monday - Wednesday 4:00pm-5:30pm

Office Hours: by appointment after class or via Zoom

Course Type: Course with a Service Learning component

Course Fee: \$190.00

Course description

What is "Social Media" - and how will developing media skills help students plan successful careers in the world of food? The world of social media has its specialized vocabulary for food studies as well as other fields. Key terms such as "strategy," "engagement," and "content" form the basis of our study. More importantly, we may say that social media today is a "must," not only for any business company seeking a place in the market but also for anyone willing to emerge professionally and build a career in a society where most people expect to have whatever they need whenever they want.

Course aims

While in Perugia, students will learn how to use social media for business and professional purposes, making the most of their presence in this world capital city of food. Perugia's traditional food markets, restaurants, and groceries offer unique opportunities to engage with the local community and explore the global-local linkages of food, from production to consumption, with a historical and contemporary perspective. Students who decide to attend "Social Media, Social Food" should understand that the course will not help them to get more followers on their personal accounts. The course focuses mainly on the quality of communication through social media. Students will not learn to be as popular as celebrities, but through observation and analysis of best practices applied by brands and professionals (media people, celebrities, etc.), they will understand how to create coherent storytelling that will help them increase their visual communication skills. Creativity is very much appreciated both in terms of copy and graphics. That's why students should make all the effort to edit original image/video content and captions. Poor-quality work will be evaluated accordingly. As is well known, food, wine, lifestyle, and leisure are ingredients of Italian culture. "Social Media, Social Food" students will thus have the chance to contribute to this tasty menu of life by using social networks. They will learn how to plan a strategy for a food-related social media account involving the institute's many partners (companies, brands, associations, institutions) and how to analyze the results of the activities they planned and how to develop new ideas.

Class methodology

The course is grounded in both theory and practice. In addition to the two class meetings per week, the discussion will continue online through social networks and the various Umbra Institute media. Students, through their assignments, will have the chance to provide high-quality material to the official Umbra Institute TikTok page and Instagram account.

All the activities in this course will be supervised and evaluated. Consequently, students will be involved in a semester-long practicum using social media for professional purposes.

Most of the assignments will be carried out in groups. This methodology will help students to develop the necessary skills to enter the labor market as professionals.

Choosing a group leader, working for a common goal, and doing your best to benefit the whole group are the principles on which all the major companies operating in the digital field are based. However, given the different personalities and abilities, *students will be assessed individually.* This means that the professor will never give a group assessment, but only and exclusively individual grades, so each student will be responsible for their part of the assignment.

Learning outcomes

After taking this course, students will be able to:

- *list* the responsibilities of different kinds of digital participation, from curating social media to blogging;
- *list* the best practices/ basic principles of content creation;
- *apply* those best practices/ basic principle to *design* effective posts;
- *analyze* the social media strategy of major brands in the food industry;
- *identify* ways to become critical citizens thanks to social media considering the impact of their actions in a digital environment.

Course Materials

Readings

Please consult Moodle for links to your readings.

Assessment

Attendance	10%
Individual Assignments	10%
Group Assignments*	15%
Service Learning Project	15%
Mid-Term Exam	25%
Final Presentation	20%
End of Semester Community Engagement Presentations	5%

*The professor will never give a group assessment, but only and exclusively individual grades, so each student will be responsible for their part of the assignment.

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent

B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: decimal and centesimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Under no circumstances can tests, assignments, and exams be rescheduled unless in case of a documented emergency or for medical reasons (accompanied by a doctor's note). Consequently, students are allowed to make up for the missed test or exam only for the reasons as mentioned above.

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences per course without penalty, per Institute policy. If you attend all the other meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Individual Assignments (10%)

Individual assignments are based on the projects that will be discussed during class. This way, students will have the opportunity to put in practice what they have learned in class.

Group Assignments (15%)

During class, students will also work in groups to produce content such as photos, videos, captions, editorial plans, and strategies.

Service Learning Project (15%)

Students will choose their own team. An important amount of time will be dedicated to the service learning project's progress in class. Teams will be required to meet outside of class for four weeks for approximately 1-2 hours. Teams will be responsible for deciding how to divide the various tasks to ensure members contribute equally throughout the course of the project.

Midterm Exam and Final Presentation (25% + 20%)

The mid-term will consist of multiple choice and essay questions of variable length. The questions will be drawn from mandatory readings, in-class presentations and discussions. For the final exam students will prepare and carry out a presentation of their individual and group activities summarizing their learning experience.

End of Semester Community Engagement Presentations (5%)

During Special Academic Events Week, the class will present a 15-minute summary of the project experience to the Umbra community during the Community Engagement Presentations on **Thursday, April 24**. Students will receive the guidelines and presentation order after the mid-semester break. Participation in this event is MANDATORY and an integral part of the community engagement grade.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. All students are allowed 2 unexcused absences, which do not need to be justified. It is the student's responsibility to keep them in case of real necessity. i.e., sickness or any other unforeseen inconvenience that may prevent students from being in class. More

than 2 absences will affect your final grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences (8 or more) may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt. If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class. Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students' grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B). Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness includes: death in immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled. Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director but only if a medical certification is provided. Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline. Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence. Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Meeting 1 (Jan 20th): *Introduction to the course*

- Presentation of the tasks that will be assigned during the semester, the activities to be carried out individually and in teams, the service learning project, the community partner for this course, and the visits that will be organized.

Focus on:

- Landscape of Italian Multinational Agribusiness
- What does Italian food mean to you? (past and current experiences, emotions, associated values, etc.)
- Class discussion: What is your favorite Italian food? What is your favorite restaurant/bar in Perugia/Italy?
- Describe your experience with Italian food through text, photos and videos

Meeting 2 (Jan 22nd): *Digitalization in 2025*

- Marketing and branding
- The channels: website, blog, e-commerce, social media
- What is social media?
- Why are they so powerful?
- Analysis of key platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Tiktok, etc.)

WEEK 2

Meeting 1 (Jan 27th): *The concept of Digital Journey*

- Overview of social media marketing and its role in the food industry.
- Analyzing a batch of food IG-accounts and their storytelling strategies.
- The importance of storytelling
- Different “tones of voice”
- Talk about the videos we watched during the previews lesson: Storytelling, Photography, Colors, Video-making techniques, get inspired by them
- Presentation in class of the group assignment: Creating a social media marketing plan for a fictional food company.

Readings:

- Waddington, S., Share this. The social media handbook for PR professionals, Wiley, New York, 2012, pp. 45-47
- Waddington, S., Share this. The social media handbook for PR professionals, Wiley, New York, 2012, pp. 3-6
- Waddington, S., Share this. The social media handbook for PR professionals, Wiley, New York, 2012, pp. 31-34
- Senyei, K., Food blogging for dummies, Wiley, New York, 2012, pp. 9-11
- Krasniak, M., Zimmerman J., Ng, D., Social media marketing all-in-one, Wiley, New York, 2021, pp. 44-46

Meeting 2 (Jan 29th): *Digital marketing*

- Digital marketing trends in the food industry.
- Goals and strategy of a communication project
- Finding your niche: How to identify your target audience.

Readings:

- Senyei, K., Food blogging for dummies, 2012, Wiley, New York, pp. 25-27
- Marais, M., Create and be seen: Everything you need to know about social media marketing, Beyond The Vale Publishing, Edenvale, 2021, pp. 19-20
- Waddington, S., Share this. The social media handbook for PR professionals, 2012, Wiley, New York, pp. 15-18

WEEK 3

Meeting 1 (Feb 3rd): *Introducing the community partner and Service learning project*

Note: This meeting is expected to last approximately an hour instead of the usual 1.30 hours. This adjustment is due to the absence of the professor, and the session will be overseen by the Community Engagement Team.

Meeting 2 (Feb 5th): *Guest lecture by Gabriella Korchmaros @whereouneedtobe_ (tiktok)*

- The world of Tiktok
- How does Tiktok works
- Community, content creation, and why it became so popular

Readings:

- Krasniak, M., Zimmerman J., Ng, D., Social media marketing all-in-one, 2021, Wiley, New York, pp. 687-693
- Krasniak, M., Zimmerman J., Ng, D., Social media marketing all-in-one, 2021, Wiley, New York, pp. 703-704

WEEK 4

Meeting 1(Feb 10th): *Content strategy*

- Content strategy
- Editorial plan and editorial calendar
- SMM, Content creator, Influencer
- Influence marketing

Readings:

- Waddington, S., Share this. The social media handbook for PR professionals, Wiley, New York, 2012, pp. 180-181
- Waddington, S., Share this. The social media handbook for PR professionals, Wiley, New York, 2012, pp. 138-139

Note: The two meetings are expected to last approximately 45 minutes instead of the usual 1.30 hours. This adjustment is due to the absence of the professor, and the session will be overseen by the Community Engagement Team.

Meeting 2 (Feb 12th): *Content first*

- Type of content
- Instagram basics
- Post, Carousel, Reel, Filters
- IG-Stories
- Live
- Quality over quantity

Watch:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUVsbmcSqw0&ab_channel=Visme

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rNanzYTuvA&ab_channel=ModernMillie

WEEK 5

Meeting 1 (Feb 17th): *Food photography*

- Techniques, styling,
- From shooting to postproduction: aperture, depth of field, iso, shutter speed
- Light and shadows, natural light and artificial light, modifiers, food photography tips, colors and space
- Props, how to shoot different types of food
- Postproduction

Readings:

- Senyei, K., Food blogging for dummies, Wiley, New York, 2012, pp. 177-179

Watch:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7tsi1BICLQ&ab_channel=SkylerBurt

Meeting 2 (Feb 19th): *Guest lecture by Massimo Marcolin @questoeilmassimo (photographer and videomaker based in Paris)*

Video making

- Techniques for capturing food in an appealing way
- Case study: The best Italian food video-creators
- Tools and applications

Watch:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6HZPmSIS5c&t=8s&ab_channel=PotatoJet
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqHUZGkzKWg&ab_channel=YouTubeCreators
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR1kzFz8NSo&ab_channel=TheBiteShot
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8PRCTrzMxs&ab_channel=TheBiteShot

WEEK 6

Meeting 1 (Feb 24th): *Improve and empower your Instagram account*

- Kickstart your Instagram account
- The profile pic
- Descriptions
- Highlights
- Bio
- Links
- Hashtags

Meeting 2 (Feb 26th): *Midterm Exam*

Semester Break

WEEK 7

Meeting 1 (Mar 10th): *Photo walk*

Readings:

- Marais, M., *Create and be seen: Everything you need to know about social media marketing*, Beyond The Vale Publishing, Edenvale, 2021, pp. 39-40
- Krasniak, M., Zimmerman J., Ng, D., *Social media marketing all-in-one*, 2021, Wiley, New York, pp. 679-680

Meeting 2 (Mar 12th): *Experience: Cooking class, making risotto*

- Live social media experience/exercise
- Write an article and create photos, videos related to the cooking class experience.
- All contents will be published online in the digital ecosystem of StudyPerugia.

Group assignment

- The instructor will provide full details.

WEEK 8

Meeting 1 (Mar 17th): *Direct Messages*

- How to manage DM
- How to respond to positive and negative reviews.
- The Algorithms of IG and Tiktok

Readings:

- McDonald, J., *Social media marketing workbook*, JM Internet Group, San Jose, 2022, pp. 45-47

Meeting 2 (Mar 19th): *Foodphotography and foodvideography 2.0*

- Sources of inspiration (Instagram, Pinterest, Magazines, Movies, etc...)
- How to create a scene
- Making photos and videos
- Postproduction in class

Readings:

- Krasniak, M., Zimmerman J., Ng, D., *Social media marketing all-in-one*, 2021, Wiley, New York, pp. 595-599

Meeting 3 (Fri, March, 21): *Field trip to Rastrello (Boutique Hotel, restaurant and Farm based on recycle) - Panicale*
A detailed itinerary will be sent earlier this week.

Meeting 4 (Sat, March, 22): Service Learning Project: *Photo shooting at "Don Gualtiero" Soup Kitchen managed by Caritas*
A detailed itinerary will be sent earlier this week.

WEEK 9

Meeting 1 (Mar 24th) *Experience: Cooking class, making amatriciana*

- Live social media experience/exercise
- Write an article and create photos, videos related to the cooking class experience.
- All contents will be published online in the digital ecosystem of StudyPerugia.

Group assignment

- The instructor will provide full details.

Meeting 2 (Mar 26th): *Which is the best time to post on social media?*

- When to post to be more effective?
- Timing and days of the week
- Programming a post
- Insight data

Readings:

- Krasniak, M., Zimmerman J., Ng, D., Social media marketing all-in-one, 2021, Wiley, New York, pp. 243-245

WEEK 10

Meeting 1(Mar 31th): *Social Network Campaigns*

- IG campaigns - how to sponsor a post
- Business manager by Meta
- What does the sponsorship exactly do?
- How to start to sponsor a post.

Readings:

- Krasniak, M., Zimmerman J., Ng, D., Social media marketing all-in-one, 2021, Wiley, New York, pp. 485-489

Meeting 2 (Apr 2nd): *The Instagram Feed*

- Harmonious vs homogeneous feed
- Content that people love

Readings:

- Waddington, S., Share this. The social media handbook for PR professionals, Wiley, New York, 2012, pp. 217-218
- Krasniak, M., Zimmerman J., Ng, D., Social media marketing all-in-one, 2021, Wiley, New York, pp. 283-286

WEEK 11

Meeting 1 (Apr 7th)

- Working on the content created during the experience at San Pietro a Pettine
- Talking about their strengths and weaknesses.
- How to improve their communication in social media.

Meeting 2 (Apr 9th): *Artificial Intelligence*

- Ai, how can it help us do our work?
- Using Ai and Chat Gpt for captions
- How to use Ai and Photoshop beta to improve photos
- Ai and Adobe firefly

Watch:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcPkFaYxDpE&ab_channel=Howfinity
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sp6K3qpVFO0&ab_channel=AdobePhotoshop

WEEK 12

Meeting 1 (Apr 14th) *Experience: Cooking class: making carbonara*

- Live social media experience/exercise
- Create an article, photos, videos related to the cooking class experience.
- The best content will be published online in the digital ecosystem of StudyPerugia.

Group assignment

- The instructor will provide full details.

Meeting 2 (Apr 16th)

- Service Learning Project: Final Presentation of the service learning project to Caritas Representative.
- Working on the Final Presentation

WEEK 13

Final Exams and Special Academic Events Week

Meeting 1 (Apr 23th) Final Exam

- Individual Final Presentation
- Presentation of the final project (each student will be graded individually)

Meeting 2 (Apr 24th): *End of the Semester Community Engagement Presentations - Special Academic Events*



**COMM/SM 310 - Social Media Social Food
Service Learning Project
Syllabus Appendix**

What is service learning?

Service learning is a type of experiential education integrated into a course in which:

- students engage in an organized activity or project aimed to address a community need that is identified in collaboration with the community partner;
- students critically reflect on the link between the experience in the community, course content, and the learning goals; and
- there is reciprocal learning both by the students and by the community partners.

Students will need a certain degree of flexibility, creativity, and self-initiative in order to realize a service learning project. Organization and open communication in-class with the professor and student team members will be key to student success.

Service Learning Project Overview

Community Partner

This course is proud to partner with **Mensa Don Gualtiero**, a soup kitchen run by **Caritas of Perugia**. Caritas is a global Catholic humanitarian organization dedicated to alleviating poverty and promoting social justice. In Perugia, Caritas oversees various initiatives, including Mensa Don Gualtiero, which aims to provide daily meals to those in need, reduce food waste, and foster a sense of community among vulnerable individuals in the Cortonese neighborhood. By working with Mensa Don Gualtiero, students will gain firsthand experience in digital marketing and social media management, contributing to the organization's efforts to raise awareness and expand its impact.

Project Description and Goals

Students will use the skills they learned in class to take pictures and create posts for an international audience to be published on the restaurant's social media after visiting the soup kitchen, meeting the volunteers, and better understanding the mission of this place. These materials will increase knowledge of the location and will assist "Don Gualtiero" Soup Kitchen in better communicating its inclusion activity.

Organization, Expectations, and Roles

Students will choose their own team. An important amount of time will be dedicated to the service learning project's progress in class. Teams will be required to meet outside of class for four weeks for approximately 1-2 hours. Teams will be responsible for deciding how to divide the various tasks to ensure members contribute equally throughout the course of the project.

Organization, Expectations, and Roles

Student teams will be chosen by the instructor. Teams will be responsible for deciding how to divide the various tasks to ensure members contribute equally throughout the course of the project. An important amount of time will

be dedicated to the service learning project's progress in class. If necessary, teams will also be required to meet outside of class each week for approximately 1-2 hours.

Group Presentation

Each team will collaborate to create and present a final detailed presentation accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. Each student will be expected to complete a Presentation Feedback Form and ask questions to the other teams presenting to promote a community of learning and support.

Guidelines:

- PowerPoint (spell-check!).
- 10 minutes.
- Each team member contributes to the preparation and delivery of the presentation.
- Rehearse presentation as a group for content, length, and transitions.

Community Engagement Final Presentations

During the Special Academic Events week, the class will give a 15-minute presentation to the Umbra community at the Community Engagement Final Presentations on **Thursday, April 24**, during the exams week. The class will work together to share a few words about the course and project and provide a few thoughts about their experience with the project and partner. Students will receive guidelines and presentation orders after the mid-semester break. Participation in this event is MANDATORY and an integral part of the community engagement grade.

Grading Rubric

The service learning project is worth a total of 20% of the final course grade, which will be divided into two categories:

1. Service Learning Project 15%
2. Community Engagement Final Presentations 5%