MMCC3046

Social Media

Session 1, In person-scheduled-weekday, North Ryde 2025

School of Communication, Society and Culture

Contents

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff Terri Senft terri.senft@mq.edu.au
Credit points 10
Prerequisites 130cp at 1000 level or above
Corequisites
Co-badged status
Unit description This unit will offer students an understanding of the key role social media now plays in media practice and culture. The ways in which social media impact and influence public debate will be explored. The unit will involve students in integrating existing and emerging online platforms and technologies into media practice. Students will analyse the way media organisations, corporations and individuals utilise social media to produce narratives and participate in public discourse. They will also examine the way social and online media have opened up new possibilities for building audiences and communities using a wide variety of social media platform and practices.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: synthesize a range of theories related to digital media, visual studies and social media studies.

ULO2: apply disciplinary theories to evaluate the various uses of visual framing and networked images in social media.

ULO3: evaluate the ontological, epistemological and ethical differences between how networked computers, humans, and institutions experience perception, knowledge and action.

ULO4: deploy the walk-through method to illustrate and unpack the visible and invisible governing structures of a social media platform, application, or practice.

ULO5: analyse and apply the theme, question, object, lens, method, presentation approach to assessing case studies in global social media culture.

General Assessment Information

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of '0' (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted.

Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue.

This late penalty will apply to non-time sensitive assessment (incl. essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings etc). Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/ exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs etc) will only be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special Consideration application. Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Platform Walkthrough	50%	No	11/04/2025 at 23:55 pm
Comparative Case Analysis	50%	No	30/05/2024 at 23:55 pm

Platform Walkthrough

Assessment Type [1]: Project
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 49 hours
Due: **11/04/2025 at 23:55 pm**
Weighting: **50%**

For this exercise, students are required to consider the question, "How do social media platforms deploy visuality to signal their ideological biases to users?" For this exercise, you should focus on ONE social media platform of your choosing, and ONE ideological bias of interest (e.g. safety, usefulness, popularity, friendship, a 'good' experience, etc. As we discussed in class, platform visuality involves what (or whom) seem to receive visual emphasis, as well as what (or whom) seems hidden, obscured, or overlooked. Refer to iLearn for further information.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- synthesize a range of theories related to digital media, visual studies and social media studies.

- apply disciplinary theories to evaluate the various uses of visual framing and networked images in social media.

- evaluate the ontological, epistemological and ethical differences between how networked computers, humans, and institutions experience perception, knowledge and action.

- deploy the walk-through method to illustrate and unpack the visible and invisible governing structures of a social media platform, application, or practice.

- analyse and apply the theme, question, object, lens, method, presentation approach to assessing case studies in global social media culture.

Comparative Case Analysis

Assessment Type [1]: Media presentation
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 49 hours
Due: **30/05/2024 at 23:55 pm**
Weighting: **50%**

This assessment has been designed to test the "theme, question, lens, method, presentation" approach to social media studies through the production of a media presentation. Refer to iLearn for further information.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- synthesize a range of theories related to digital media, visual studies and social media studies.

- apply disciplinary theories to evaluate the various uses of visual framing and networked images in social media.

- evaluate the ontological, epistemological and ethical differences between how networked computers, humans, and institutions experience perception, knowledge and action.

- deploy the walk-through method to illustrate and unpack the visible and invisible governing structures of a social media platform, application, or practice.

- analyse and apply the theme, question, object, lens, method, presentation approach to assessing case studies in global social media culture.

[1] If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the Writing Centre for academic skills support.

[2] Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

Looking for Unit Description and Calendar ? You can find these under "Unit Schedule" below.

Unit Start Date: Week 2

Please note: We begin classes at the start of Week 2. That's the week of March 3, 2025.

Class Format: Lectorial

This year, we will use what the university calls a 'lectorial' format. This means that rather than registering for separate lecture and tutorial sections, students will register for a lecture section ONLY, attending ONE class per week. This class will run as a TWO-HOUR block (e.g. from 9am-11am). During that time, we will mix lecture material, assessment-related workshops, and class conversation.   All lectorial sessions will be run by the unit convenor, Terri Senft.

Attendance & Participation (Expected, Ungraded)

While class attendance and participation WILL be expected, they will NOT be graded.

Students who need to miss class for any reason will be expected to review the lectorial recording and complete their weekly Assessment Progress Form (more on these, below), which will show they are up to speed with their classmates.

Assessment Progress Form (Expected, Ungraded)

During the last few minutes of each class, students will be asked to complete and submit an Assessment Progress Form for the week (the form is online.) We will discuss these forms at length during our first class. A short explanation is that they are an accountability measure designed to encourage you to you tackle assessments by breaking them into small chunks, decisions, and questions to answer.

Students who submit the form will be noted as participating in class for the week, whether they were physically there or were absent that day. Students who do attend class that week but do not submit the form will be noted as non-participating.

Please note: The forms themselves will NOT be graded, but might be referenced in conversations about the assessment and/or questions about final marks.

Need to Miss Class? Here is what to Do.

Students who need to miss class for any reason will be expected to review the lectorial recording and complete their weekly Assessment Progress Form, which will show they are up to speed with their classmates.

How can you access the recording? At present, we have one online offering of this unit over Zoom. Our plan is to record the proceedings of that class (muting any direct student conversations to protect participants). We will create a link to the recording each week, and make that available to all students, so that anyone who missed class for illness or any other reason can view what happened on their own. Information on how to access the "catch up recording" and the Assessment Progress form will be on iLearn and will be emailed to all students each week.

How About Office Hours?

Office hours will be delivered by Zoom in a group setting. Please see iLearn for more information.

Policy Regarding Private Meets with Terri

This class is exceptionally large for a Level 3 unit, and the only personal meetings we can have with students are those relating to personal issues: illness, disability accommodations, domestic hardship issues, foreign student difficulty accessing materials, etc.

Students desiring to "have a quick chat" about their assessment ideas will be directed to bring their questions/rough drafts to Terri's group office hour session. Please note that office hours for this unit are held once weekly in group format over Zoom, where we will work on issues as a cohort. This is because there really are no assessment-related questions that so unique and personal that the everyone wouldn't benefit from working through them as a group.

Unit Schedule

UNIT CALENDAR & SCHEDULE

You can see a copy of our schedule with class meets, lecture topics, and assessment dates here:

https://z9bcp7k.sharing.bublup.com/ui/landing_page?item_id=001-i-6caa8495-71cd-4c00-8709-4b28e3b28856

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Social Media: People, Platforms, Processes

This is a class devoted to social media culture: the personal, social, political and economic ramifications of living in a time dominated by social media. Although we love students from areas like marketing, public relations, advertising, law, and/or computing, in this unit, we will focus on a distinctly <u>humanist</u> question, namely: **What are the best ways to learn, advocate, create, love and protect ourselves, when "putting yourself out there" online offers as much threat as promise?**

To approach this question, we've subtitled this unit, "People, Platforms, Processes." On social media, these simple words can unravel quickly. Take, for instance, "people." Have you ever thought you were dealing with a human online, only to later realize you were interacting with a non-human user like a bot? Do you sometimes feel pressured to adopt a particular persona while functioning in more 'professional' environments online? In spite of your best intentions, do you sometimes find yourself using social media metrics such as 'likes' to gauge the impact of your connections? And what about those other people online? How do you perceive them—as friends, as community, as a crowd, as a market segment, as a mob, as a bit of all of these?

Now let's turn to social media platforms. We tend to associate these with names like Facebook, YouTube, WeChat and Little Red Book, but social functionality is also built in to travel platforms like TripAdvisor, shopping platforms like Amazon, gaming resource platforms like Steam, shop/ gaming hybrids like Temu, streaming platforms like Spotify, live-casting platforms like Twitch, fitness platforms like FitBit—the list goes on. In our unit, we understand the notion of social media platforms broadly to accommodate these realities.

One reason platforms can be can be hard to socialize on (let alone govern) is because conceptually speaking, the term is all over the place. Sometimes we think of platforms as tools we use (to access resources, for monetization); other times we speak of them as places we visit (like when we say we are 'on' Instagram when really, we are on our chair.) Still other times, we associate them (or their users) with values we trust--or don't.

Most of us intellectually 'get' that social media platforms are owned by companies, designed for profit, and are vulnerable to things like political regimes, economic climates, environmental forces, etc. Yet in everyday experience, platforms can feel more like invisible infrastructure, humming away unnoticed the background, until it breaks down. When that happens, we can abruptly find ourselves compromised—sometimes in ways that put us at serious emotional, social, financial, informational, political and/or physical risk.

To talk about the promises of social media as well as its 'breakdown' moments, this unit will center discussions on two types of process: psycho-social and techno-social. <u>Psycho-social processes</u> include psychological dynamics like cognition, learning, instinct, habit, impulse, and emotions. They also include sociological dynamics like trust, bonding, intimacy, cooperation, conflict, authority, norms, values, influence, and group behaviors. <u>Techno-social processes</u> are especially important to discussions of social media phenomena like virality, fame, meme communication, online challenges, blame and shame cycles, 'cancel culture' and online vigilantism. These include but are not limited to:

- *Platform interfaces* designed to turn conscious choices into unconscious habits. These
  tend to be adopted because at first they make our time online easier, more fun, more

profitable, etc. Sometimes these reasons continue to be sound; other times, not.

- *User profile systems* that often demand our disclosure (of name, of photo, of location, of contacts, etc.) and compliance before offering opportunities for participation. These are often adopted because they offer the promise of safety, trustworthiness and authentic interaction with others. Sometimes this stays the case; other times, it does not.

- *Algorithmic decision making processes* about which sorts of content should receive more 'push weight' online and which should not. These tend to be platform-specific and proprietary, leading to the rise of an 'algorithmic imaginary,' in which users speculate about what the platform does and does not want, and at times find themselves modify behavior accordingly.

- *Platform business models* almost entirely reliant on advertising revenues, which require companies to monitor, evaluate, and package online user data into market segments, which is sold to interested 'third parties.' This data is later re-presented by platforms to users as personalized 'for you' findings, which can be helpful, but can also lead us into so-called filter bubble/echo chamber arrangements online.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (https://policies.mq.edu.au). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Progression Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Fitness to Practice Procedure
- Assessment Procedure
- Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- Special Consideration Policy

Students seeking more policy resources can visit Student Policies (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit Policy Central (https://policies.mq.edu.au) and use the search tool.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of

Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct

Results

Results published on platform other than eStudent, (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit connect.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe academic integrity – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free online writing an d maths support, academic skills development and wellbeing consultations.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://stu dents.mq.edu.au/support/

Academic Success

Academic Success provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- Workshops
- Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader
- Access StudyWISE
- Upload an assignment to Studiosity
- Complete the Academic Integrity Module

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- Subject and Research Guides
- Ask a Librarian

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of Student Support Services including:

- IT Support
- Accessibility and disability support with study
- Mental health support
- Safety support to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual

assault

- Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues

- Student Advocacy provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via the Service Connect Portal, or contact Service Connect.

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/ offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Unit information based on version 2025.03 of the Handbook