

TECM 3550: Content Strategy

Dr. Jordan Frith

Office: AUD 305

Class time: Thursday, 6-8:50 (AUD 308)

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Office hours: 2-:330 T-TH, 5:30-6 TH; (and other days if you make an appointment. Also, try to let me know if you'll be stopping by for office hours. I could be called away for another meeting.)

I'm available to meet either face-to-face or digitally using google hangouts or skype (or just a straight up phone call). Email me and we can set something up.

I respond quickly to emails. If you don't get a response from me within 24 hours, the emails might have been caught in my spam filter. Just resend it.

Description

This class will cover various aspects of content strategy and social media, including web content strategy and content management more generally. We will have lectures on your readings, but we will also do in-class work on various projects, potentially including a client project.

By the end of this course you should be able to

- exhibit project management skills
- understand the rhetorical importance of branding/promotion
- evaluate social media tools for use in a professional setting
- understand the importance of developing high quality web content
- develop advanced content strategy reports
- understand principles for designing content with responsive design

Required books (total cost)

The total cost for materials in this course will be ~\$60 dollars, depending on what you decide to do.

I'm requiring 3 books for this class. I tried to find affordable books because I hate the idea of having a class spend a ton of money on books. I included links to where you can buy each book.

Content Strategy for the Web 2nd Edition by Kristina Halvorson & Melissa Rach

<http://www.amazon.com/ContentStrategyWeb2ndEdition/dp/0321808304>

(new for \$22, used from \$16, Kindle version \$15)

Going Responsive by Karen Mcgrane (paperback \$21, eBook only \$11)

<https://abookapart.com/products/going-responsive>

The Content Strategy Toolkit by Meghan Casey (paperback \$20-\$28, eBook \$15)

<https://www.amazon.com/Content-Strategy-Toolkit-Guidelines-Templates/dp/0134105109>

Bluehost hosting ~\$10 for the semester

Grade

- CMS comparison report (20%)
- Group audit (20%)
- Landscape analysis (20%)
- Group content strategy report (30%)
- Group evaluation materials/ Participation/possible quizzes (10%)

Course Evaluation

Your grade in this course will be determined as follows:

A = 90 – 100. To receive an A in this course, you will have exhibited the knowledge to use different new media tools. Your assignments will be well thought-out and relatively error free, and your final project will show that you are able to synthesize the multiple topics we cover throughout the course.

B = 80 - 89.9. To receive a B, you will show that you understand the issues and debates about new media we cover in this course. You will also be able to use the new media tools we cover in the course. Your work will be well organized and relatively error free, but it may include gaps in logic or make a few unsupported claims.

C = 70 - 79.9. To receive a C, you will be able to understand most of what we have covered, but that understanding may not come through in every assignment. Your work will be adequate, but it may have obvious weaknesses that are not addressed throughout the semester.

D = 60 - 69.9. To receive a D, you will have submitted assignments that are unclear, difficult to read, filled with distracting errors, and incomplete. These assignments are not easy to follow or understand and feature distracting errors and obvious gaps in logic.

F = Below 60. To receive an F, you will have shown an inability to engage with the content we cover. You probably missed a couple assignments and too many classes.

ADA

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act, I will work with the Office of Disability Accommodation to help reasonably qualified students with disabilities. If you have such a disability, please advise me in writing of your needs no later than the second week of class.

Academic Dishonesty & Integrity

It is your responsibility to become familiar with UNT's Policy of Academic Dishonesty. This policy defines the following forms of academic dishonesty:

Cheating: intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.

Plagiarism: the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person as one's own without acknowledgement.

Fabrication: intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

Facilitating: academic dishonesty intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity.

If any course material is submitted that violates this policy of academic dishonesty, the assignment will receive a grade of "F" and appropriate judicial action will be filed. This action includes a report of academic misconduct to your college Dean and possible dismissal from The University of North Texas. There are no first-offense warnings regarding plagiarism. In addition, **if I catch you plagiarizing, you will fail this course.** Contact me if you're ever confused about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Misunderstandings, miscommunication, oversights, or lack of comprehension as to what constitutes academic dishonesty are not accepted in this course.

Attendance

Your presence in this course is mandatory, not optional. We only meet once a week, so you are allowed 1 absence. Each absence past that will result in your losing ten points from your final grade. So your second absence will result in -10 points, your third -20, and so on. If you are between 3-10 minutes late, I count it as a tardy, which counts for ½ an absence. If you are more than 10 minutes late, you will be counted fully absent.

Emergency notification and procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to notify you quickly with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon

permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at my.unt.edu. Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas in the buildings where your classes are held, 2) determine how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and 3) identify where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly.

Assignment Submission

Unless otherwise noted, you must submit your assignments in electronic format through Blackboard. I don't want assignments submitted on paper. I spill a lot of coffee, and my handwriting is terrible. It's better for everyone involved if I grade and comment on your work electronically.

When you submit an assignment, you **must** use the following file naming convention: LASTNAME__ASSIGNMENTNAME. So if I submitted a personal reflection assignment, the file name would be Frith_PersonalReflection. File names are important. It's difficult to keep track of files when I end up with 22 "mediaanalysis.docx" files. For group work, make sure everyone's name is somewhere on the document.

All assignments should be single spaced and use a readable (don't use Arial...personal preference) 12 pt. font with 1 inch margins unless otherwise noted. It wasn't very long ago that I was an undergraduate, so I know all the tricks to make a document look longer than it really is. Don't use any of them.

Assignments are due by the time noted on Blackboard. For each 24 hour period the assignment is late, you will lose 10% off the final grade. After 7 days, I will not accept late assignments. If you have a genuine reason to turn an assignment in late (an athletic event, family emergency, etc.), you must let me know beforehand. Also, I'm nice (or at least I like to think so), so if you have something that comes up, you can ask me for help. I'll be far more likely to give you a slightly extended deadline if you ask me well in advance. I won't be able to help if I get an email a couple hours before an assignment is due.

Resources

Code Academy: <https://www.codecademy.com/>

Slack (download the app): <https://slack.com/>

About your client

Read this: <https://casadenton.org/>

Watch this (30 seconds): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyFcBo5UHxc>

Watch this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfbPW19vgk0>

Assignments (total of 200 points)

Assignment 1: CMS comparison report (20 points)

The online CMS landscape is rather crowded. However, three CMS dominate the market: Wordpress, Drupal, and Joomla. If you go into web development/content strategy, you may have to work with any of these three. Consequently, for this report, you will research each of these three popular CMS.

For the report, your audience will be a high-level manager who knows almost nothing about web development. She just wants you to figure out which direction the company should head in to build a web presence. Consequently, you will start the report by explaining why you're writing. You will then spend a significant amount of time explaining what a CMS is, why people use them, and what the advantages are.

You will then break the report down into a comparison of the three CMSs listed earlier. For each of these sections, you will describe the CMS and give background on how popular it is and who uses it. You will then describe the strengths and weaknesses. You will do this for each of the three. Use subheadings!

You will conclude the report by recommending which CMS will be best for the project. You don't have to make a set-in-stone recommendation. Instead, you can make a conditional recommendation. In other words, use "if." As in, "If we want to hire programmers and have additional freedom, we should...". "If we want a simple, easy to change site, we should..."

I expect this report to be detailed and around 1,200-1,500 words. You also must use citations, and don't hesitate to cite videos you watch. However, consider your sources. Some sources have a reason to promote one CMS over another. That doesn't mean their points aren't good, but it does mean you should be skeptical and verify.

Assignment 2 (Group assignment): Qualitative and quantitative content audit (20 points)

For this assignment, you will work as a group to do a complete audit of your client's web presence. You will go through every web page to catalog and evaluate the content. You will also audit the client's social media presence. To audit the social media presence, you will categorize at least the last 50 posts on the social media pages.

The deliverable will be a report that provides a fairly broad overview of what is currently on the site and the strengths and weaknesses of the content. Possibly most importantly, you will also include two appendices: 1. Your spreadsheet for your quantitative audit, 2. Your spreadsheet for your qualitative audit. I will grade your group on both the report and the quality of data in the appendices.

Assignment 3 (Individual): Competitive Review/Landscape Analysis (20 points)

This assignment is the second part of your larger, semester-long group project. For the project, you will perform a competitive review (explained in your readings).

Your report will look at three similar sites to the site you're developing. Basically, you will find websites for three similar businesses/nonprofits. You will write about the content these three sites have on their websites and what they post to social media. You will conclude with some variation of a "lessons learned" section in which you develop a set of recommendations on how you can use these sites to help develop your own content strategy. The lessons learned section can cover positives you found on other sites you want to emulate and things you want to avoid from other sites.

You should pay particular attention to the social media practices of the three nonprofits. Your client specifically would love social media advice.

This report will require a clearly defined heading structure, good organization, strong research skills, and good writing. You are also welcome to use screenshots and other images if you think it will help you make your point. The report should be around 1,500-2,000 words, and I will be grading you on how clear your writing is, how informative your report is, and how useful the report would be to the client.

Possible heading structure (this is all written to the client)

- Introduction
 - Explain why you're looking at other sites, what you hope to learn, etc.
 - Forecasting statement
- First site
 - You choose subheadings
- Second site
 - You choose subheadings
- Third site
 - You choose subheadings
- Comparison to the your client's web presence
- Lessons learned

Assignment #4 Personal site using a CMS (15 points)

Your personal site must include the following pieces: 1. An intro page, 2. Your resume, 3. Portfolio pieces, and 4. whatever...anything else you want to include.

I don't care what you use to build your site. Wordpress is easiest, but Drupal or Joomla are great options if you have a bit more coding knowledge. I suggest using Joomla if you've taken 3200. You **must** use one of the three and host the site using Bluehost (or another hosting service). But it must be hosted somewhere and not use the free Wordpress version.

Assignment 5: Content strategy report (30 points)

This final project is going to consist of a couple different major pieces. You will submit them all as one large report. I will upload a detailed assignment description (partially based on the client) later in the semester.

Group evaluation/group tool use/class participation (10 points)

I will be a member of your Slack chat logs and your Asana project management group. I will be evaluating your participation.

In addition, each group member will write an evaluation of the other group members. I will take those evaluations into consideration when assigning your group participation grade.

You also are expected to participate in class discussions. I will grade you on your participating and professionalism. Also, I will use this slot to open the possibility of assigning reading quizzes.

Schedule

Readings are due by the class period they're listed. For example, if you have a reading listed for the 4th, you will have to have read it by the class period on the 4th. Assignments will be due by midnight on the day they are due.

Date	Readings	Lecture topics/assignments
1/16	None	Introduction to a few digital tools Copyright and intellectual property
1/23	10 CMSs 5 Reasons to use a CMS Brumberger and Lauer (blackboard)	Introduction to Content Management Systems
1/30	Technical communication in a social media world Why employees should use collaboration tools	Social media in the workplace
2/6	Havorlson (chapters 1-6)	What is content strategy? Landscape analysis Writing reports Paper structure, headings
2/13	Havorlson (chapters 7-12)	Working in organizations Making the case for content <i>Client visit</i> CMS report due
2/20	Rach (parts 1 +2)	Exercises, more content strategy
2/27	Rach (parts 3 +4)	Exercises, more content strategy, project management
3/6	Rach (parts 5+ browse the Appendix)	Exercises, more content strategy, structured authoring

	Structured Authoring and XML	Audit due
	Spring Break	
3/22	Mcgrane (entire book)	Responsive design
3/29	Basics of branding Branding vs. marketing What is a brand anyway?	Branding <i>Client visit</i> Competitive review due
4/5	11 ways to grow your Nonprofit social media followers A strategic guide to nonprofit social media Building a hardcore social media strategy Best times to post on social media 10 social media trends to prepare for	Social media strategies Facebook Twitter Pinterest, etc.
4/12	Beginner's Guide Social optimization	Search Engine Optimization
4/19	Which stats matter How to use google analytics Twitter analytics Google analytics	Measurement analytics
4/26	Boyd and Crawford, 2011 Lohr, 2012	Big Data Social algorithms and content strategy
5/3	Tying it all up (plus, it's a pre-finals day)	
5/8	Finals!	Final content strategy report due by 11:59