Course unit title	Code
Communication in social media	

Annotation
Social media has profoundly transformed the way we receive information, communicate, and represent ourselves in the digital age. This course delves into the profound impact of social media on communication, identity, and society in the digital age. Students will explore the role of social media platforms in shaping personal identities, social dynamics, and public discourse. By examining the ways individuals engage with content, construct virtual selves, and interact within digital spaces, the course provides critical insights into the intersection of technology, culture, and communication. Through this lens, students will gain a deeper understanding of how social media influences contemporary social interactions, the formation of online communities, and the evolution of public engagement in the digital era.

Lecturer(s)	Department, Faculty
Coordinator: Asst. Prof. Dr. Ingrida Kelpšienė	Faculty of Communication Saulėtekio ave. 9, building I, Vilnius

Study cycle	Type of the course unit
Erasmus+	Optional

Mode of delivery	Semester or period when it is delivered	Language of instruction
Face-to-face	Spring	English

Requisites	
Prerequisites: Students must have an active social media account and basic familiarity with social media platforms and tools	**Co-requisites (if relevant):** Students must have proficiency in English for reading academic literature, engaging in discussions, and presenting ideas publicly in class

Number of ECTS credits allocated	Student's workload (total)	Contact hours	Individual work
5	130	34	96

Purpose of the course unit: programme competences to be developed
The purpose of this course unit is to equip students with a comprehensive understanding of how social media shapes digital communication, identity construction, and user behaviour in the contemporary digital age. The course aims to develop students' analytical and critical thinking skills, enabling them to engage with social media's role in content creation, identity formation, social interaction, and digital conflict. Through a combination of theoretical insights and practical applications, students will gain the ability to analyse and evaluate social media content, user behaviour, and the dynamics of online communities.

Programme competences to be developed:

- Critical analysis of digital communication: develop the ability to critically analyse how social media platforms influence communication trends, content creation, and public discourse, using established theoretical frameworks.
- Understanding of virtual identity and impression management: gain knowledge of the psychological and social dynamics that shape virtual identities and how individuals manage and perform their digital personas across platforms.
- Insights into social identity and community dynamics: cultivate the ability to analyse social identity formation within online communities, exploring the dynamics of belonging, exclusion, and conflict in digital spaces.
- Behavioural analysis and engagement strategies: acquire the skills to examine and interpret user behaviour patterns, engagement dynamics, and emotional drivers on social media, understanding the impacts of participation inequality and disruptive behaviours.
- Application of social media strategies: develop practical skills to create, curate, and manage digital content while recognizing the strategies that contribute to virality and user engagement.

Learning outcomes of the course unit	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
Understand and apply the 4Ps framework to analyse and create digital content, while recognizing the factors behind content virality and the strategies that drive content popularity and online engagement across social platforms.	- Interactive lectures with real-world application - Self-reflection exercise	A1. Social media challenge
Develop practical skills in digital content creation by applying the concepts of creativity, user-driven content, and virality to produce compelling, shareable social media content.		
Understand and apply virtual identity and self-presentation using Goffman's theory of impression management and D. Gauntlett's media theory to analyse how media platforms shape online personas and influence the way individuals curate and perform their identities.	- Lecture-based learning - Simulation-based learning (role-playing game)	A2. Social media profile evaluation
Evaluate strategies for performing digital identities, assessing how users manage and optimize their online presence to shape perceptions and engage with audiences		
Gain insight on the construction of social identities and the dynamics of belonging and exclusion in online communities, examining how individuals navigate digital spaces and the role of social media in shaping these processes.	- Lecture-based learning - Framework-based group activity	A3. Social media conversation analysis
Apply theoretical insights on social identity, belonging, and digital conflict to analyse social media conversations and users' sentiments.		

Understand participation patterns and user engagement on social media, examining the roles of different user types (lurkers vs. active contributors) and how these dynamics shape social media communities and user interactions.	- Lecture-based learning - Question-and-answer (Q&A) session	A4. User case study
Evaluate the psychological, social, and cultural factors that drive online behaviour, exploring motivations behind content creation, sharing, and negative or positive behaviour patterns		

Course content: breakdown of the topics	Contact hours							Individual work: time and assignments	
	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Workshops	Laboratory work	Internship / work	Contact hours, total	Individual work	Assignments
1. Digital creativity & the power of content in social media • Understanding digital creativity Exploring the 4Ps framework in the context of digital creativity and its role in shaping online content. • User-driven content: creation, context, and influence Examining how social media platforms shape the creation, distribution, and reception of content, redefining users as content creators and driving the evolution of digital communication trends. • The science of virality: how content spreads Analysing the key factors of content popularity, the psychology behind viral trends, and the strategies for maximizing digital reach and engagement.	4		4				**8**	**24**	Berger & Milkman 2022 (required) A1. Social media challenge (creative assignment focused on social media content creation and digital storytelling)
2. Virtual identity and impression management in the digital age	4		4				**8**	**24**	Jacobsen & Kristiansen 2015; Propescu 2019 (required)

• The virtual self: identity & online representation Discussing the concept of virtual identity through E. Goffman's theory of impression management, examining how individuals curate and present themselves in digital spaces. • Media & identity formation Analysing D. Gauntlett's media theory and its insights into how media shapes perceptions, influences identity construction, while offering diverse, complex and ever-evolving digital representations • Performing identity on social media: strategies & perceptions Investigating the ways users curate, perform, and manage their digital personas, utilizing various strategies to shape audience perceptions in online environments.									A2. Social media profile evaluation (essay focused on evaluating social media profile and established online presence)
3. Othering and belonging: social identity, communities and discourses on social media • Social identity & online communities Investigating how individuals construct social identities, engage in digital communities, and navigate belonging and exclusion in virtual spaces. • Othering & belonging in the context of digital conflict Exploring how group-based differences shape online and offline divisions, fuelling social tensions, digital exclusion, and global challenges, while influencing power dynamics and conflict in digital spaces. • Narratives & discourses in social media Exploring how social media platforms shape discourse, spread information, and influence public perception, reinforcing or challenging dominant narratives.	4		4					**8**	**24**	Bonacchi, Altaweel & Krzyzanska 2018; Feldman & Musih 2023 (required) A3. Social media conversation analysis (analytical assignment focused on analysing users' comments, sentiments, and perceptions)

4. User behaviour on social media: dynamics, motivations, and impact • Online participation and engagement patterns Exploring participation inequality and the dynamics between lurkers and active contributors, as well as the roles and impact of different user types on social media communities. • Drivers of online behaviour Analysing the psychological, social, and cultural factors that shape user behaviour, from the motivations behind content creation and sharing to the external influences driving participation, and the emotional triggers behind different social practices. • Negative behaviour and its impact Investigating trolling and online hate, exploring the factors behind disruptive behaviours, and examining how these negative actions influence social media communities, shaping user interactions and the overall digital discourse.	4	2	4				**8**	**24**	Adjin-Tettey & Garman 2022; Soares, et al 2023; Sun, Rau, & Ma, 2014 (required) A4. User case study (group assignment focused on investigating behaviour and perceptions of social media users)
Total	**16**	**2**	**16**				**34**	**96**	

Assessment strategy	Weight %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
A1. Social media challenge (creative assignment focused on social media content creation and digital storytelling)	25%	During the semester	Summative assessment is based on an accumulated evaluation score combining completion of four individual assignments each weighting 25%. The final grade is the average score of all four evaluations. Main criteria for individual assignments' evaluation: - Ability to work with social media content and use platform's tools and techniques - Ability to analyse and interpret social media information - Ability to organize individual work and adhere to assignment's guidelines - Student's performance in the seminars[1] and ability to present one's work
A2. Social media profile evaluation (essay focused on evaluating social media profile and established online presence)	25%	During the semester	
A3. Social media conversation analysis (analytical assignment focused on analysing users' comments,	25%	During the semester	

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[1] Participation in seminars is mandatory

A4. User case study (group assignment focused on investigating behaviour and perceptions of social media users	25%	During the semester	

Author	Publishing year	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication: pages	Publishing house or internet site
Required reading				
Adjin-Tettey, T. D., & Garman, A.	2022	Lurking as a mode of listening in social media: Motivations-based typologies	Digital Transformation and Society, 2(1): 11–26	https://doi.org/10.1108/DTS-07-2022-0028
Berger, J. & Milkman K. L.	2012	What Makes Online Content Viral?	Journal of Marketing Research 49, 2: 192–205	https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.10.0353
Bonacchi, C., Altaweel, M., & Krzyzanska, M.	2018	The heritage of Brexit: Roles of the past in the construction of political identities through social media	Journal of Social Archaeology, 18(2): 174–192	https://doi.org/10.1177/1469605318759713
Jacobsen, M., & Kristiansen, S.	2015	Goffman's Sociology of Everyday Life Interaction. In The Social Thought of Erving Goffman	SAGE Publications, Inc.: 67–84	https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381725
Feldman, J., & Musih, N.	2023	Selfies in Auschwitz: Popular and contested representations in a digital generation.	Memory Studies, 16(2): 403–420	https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980221101111
Propescu, M. M.	2019	Personal Online Identity-Branding or Impression Management	Scientific Bulletin, 24, 1: 67-75	https://doi.org/10.2478/bsaft-2019-0008
Soares, F. B., Gruzd, A., Jacobson, J., & Hodson, J.	2023	To troll or not to troll: Young adults' anti-social behaviour on social media	PLOS ONE, 18(5): e0284374	https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0284374
Sun, N., Rau, P. P.-L., & Ma, L.	2014	Understanding lurkers in online communities: A literature review	Computers in Human Behavior, 38: 110–117	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.05.022
Recommended reading				
Arif, Stewart, Leo Graiden and Starbird, Kate	2018	Acting the Part: Examining Information Operations Within #BlackLivesMatter Discourse	Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction, 2: 1-27	https://doi.org/10.1145/3274289

Aziz, Fatima	2017	Performing citizenship: Freedom march selfies by Pakistani instagrammers	Selfie Citizenship: 21-28	https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-45270-8_3
Berger, J.	2016	Contagious: Why Things Catch On	Simon and Schuster: 1-28	
Culpepper, M. K., & Gauntlett, D.	2024	The Construction of Everyday Creative Identity	Journal of Creativity, 34(2): 1-8	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yjoc.2024.100085
Hartung, C.	2017	Selfies for/of Nepal: Acts of Global Citizenship and Bearing Witness. In A. Kuntsman (Ed.), Selfie Citizenship	Springer International Publishing: 39–47	https://www.academia.edu/31945595/Selfie_Citizenship
Hogan, Bernie	2010	The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online	Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society 30, no. 6: 377–86	https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610385893
Ibrahim, Yasmin	2017	Facebook and the Napalm Girl: Reframing the Iconic as Pornographic	Social Media + Society 3, no. 4 (October 1, 2017): 2056305117743140	https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117743140
Malecki, W. P., Kowal, M., Dobrowolska, M., & Sorokowski, P.	2021	Defining Online Hating and Online Haters	Frontiers in Psychology, 12	https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.744614
Ryzova, Lucie	2015	Unstable Icons, Contested Histories: Vintage Photographs and Neoliberal Memory in Contemporary Egypt	Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication 8, 1: 37–68	https://doi.org/10.1163/18739865-00801004
Siegel, L. A., Tussyadiah, I., & Scarles, C.	2022	Cyber-physical traveler performances and Instagram travel photography as ideal impression management	Current Issues in Tourism, 0(0): 1–25	https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2022.2086451
Zannettou, S., Caulfield, T., Setzer, W., Sirivianos, M., Stringhini, G., & Blackburn, J.	2019	Who Let The Trolls Out? Towards Understanding State-Sponsored Trolls	Proceedings of the 10th ACM Conference on Web Science: 353–362	https://doi.org/10.1145/3292522.3326016