## **Media and Social Networks (with Digital Methods for Analysis Module)**

## Prof. Federico Bionda; Prof. Elisabetta Locatelli

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

*Course aims*

Social media platforms are having an increasingly relevant impact in society and contemporary communication processes. The course aims to present the theoretical models required to understand the logics of the *platform society* and social media from a sociological perspective. Particular attention will be paid to the role played by social media in the production and use of information related to the healthcare and wellness industry. Furthermore, the course aims to introduce students to the use of survey questionnaires, the interpretation of the results through the main tools of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis, and the effective presentation of data, always with a focus on health and well-being.

**Intended learning outcomes**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Knowledge and understanding: understand the logics at the basis of social media platforms; identify the different forms of communication on social media, with a focus on institutional communication, as well as the one related to healthcare and wellness; know the logics implied in the creation of questionnaires and the main techniques of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.
2. Ability to apply knowledge and understanding: assess the impact of the logics of platforms on communication dynamics; invent and produce communication contents related to health and well-being; carry on a possible research field independently, from the initial phase of writing the questionnaire, to its analysis and presentation.
3. Independent Judgement: identify and recognise the motivational structures implied in the use and consumption of social media; assess the resource/goal relationship of a communication strategy based on social media; develop a concrete autonomy, allowing them to identify the best choice in terms of types of queries that are necessary to answer specific research questions (with a focus on health and well-being) and the best analysis to carry out for the writing of a research report.
4. Communication Skills: structure and effective presentation of the results of the research, and create a communication plan.
5. Learning Skills: acquire a working methodology related to workflow management, *problem solving*, the management of information and curiosity, and the research techniques that can be useful to write a graduation thesis.

In particular

In *Module* *1* (Prof. Elisabetta Locatelli)

The module will explore the logics of social behaviour in social media; the logics of social media platforms; social influence dynamics in social media. In addition, it will analyse communication logics on social media, especially those related to the field of institutional communication, healthcare, and wellness.

In *Module* *2* (Prof. Federico Bionda)

The module will introduce students to the independent development of questionnaires, with a focus on health and well-being, and a general understanding of the different types of questions and their systematisation in a coherent survey workflow. Furthermore, it aims to provide students with the main tools of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis, to be used in dedicated research reports. At the end of the course, students will be able to acquire a key frame for the presentation of results allowing them to communicate in an effective way a conspicuous number of data using accurate infographics.

***COURSE CONTENT***

In *Module* *1* (Prof. Elisabetta Locatelli)

The module will examine the following topics:

1. Social media: definition, scenario, the logics of social behaviour, the logics of the platforms.
2. The *platformisation* phenomenon: features and consequences.
3. Social media and the communication related to health and well-being: scenarios and logics.
4. Social media and social influence processes: theories and models.
5. The development of contents for social media

The first part of the course will also introduce and discuss relevant communication projects thanks to the meeting with subject-matter experts. The teaching method will also include the development of projects.

In *Module* *2* (Prof. Federico Bionda)

The module will examine the following topics:

1. An introduction to the set-up of questionnaires with Surveygizmo: types of questions, advanced set-ups.
2. Statistical analyses with open source software: data import, types of variables (nominal, ordinal, scale); multiple choice sets; customised tables; normality tests; correlation and regression.
3. The presentation and organisation of the results of the analysis.

***READING LIST***

*Module* 1 (Prof. Elisabetta Locatelli):

Slides and teaching material used in class and made available on Blackboard.

Cotter, K. (2019). Playing the visibility game: How digital influencers and algorithms negotiate influence on Instagram. *New Media & Society*, 21*(4)*, p. 895-913.

Deema, F., Martinez-Menchaca, H. R., Ahmed, M., and Farsi, N. (2022). Social Media and Health Care (Part II): Narrative Review of Social Media Use by Patients. *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 24, no. 1: e30379. https://doi.org/10.2196/30379.

Locatelli, E., Lovari, A. (2021). *Platformization of healthcare communication: Insights from the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy*. Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies, 13 *(2)*, p. 249-266, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs_000XX_XX>

Locatelli, E., (2020). Influencers as socio-technical actors: mapping the paths of influence and the traces of the digital influencers’ system in Italy. *Journal of Sociocybernetics*, 17 *(1)*, 1-18. doi:10.26754/ojs\_jos/jos.202013940.

Moorhead, S., Hazlett, D., Harrison, L. Carroll, J., Irwin, A., et al. (2013). A new dimension of health care: systematic review of the uses, benefits, and limitations of social media for health communication. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 15*(4)*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3636326/> .

Uzunoğlu, E., Misci Kip, S. (2014). Brand communication through digital influencers: Leveraging blogger engagement. *International Journal of Information Management*, 34*(5)*, p. 592-602.

Van Dijck, J., Poell, T. (2013). Understanding Social Media Logi*c*. *Media and Communication*, 1*(1)*, p. 2–14. <https://www.cogitatiopress.com/mediaandcommunication/article/view/70/60>

All the articles can be found using the Opac of the UCSC library.

Further readings (such as essays, research contributions, and lecture notes) will be made available on Blackboard.

*Module* 2 (Prof. Federico Bionda)

Teaching material used in class and made available on Blackboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The teaching method will be based on the commentary of texts, the presentation of research and case studies, the development of projects, and practical activities carried out in class and guided by the lecturer with the aim to allow students to apply the ability to use the research software illustrated during the course. During the course, students will be asked to carry out a project work (in groups) on the basis of the brief assigned by the lecturers; this will promote a *learning-by-doing* approach.

Furthermore, they will have the opportunity to explore the topics of the course thanks to the success stories of subject-matter experts that will take part to the lectures.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

*Assessment method*

The final mark will result from the assessment of the two parts of the course, as follows: an individual mark related to the theoretical part of *Module 1* and *Module 2* (50%), and a collective mark related to the group project based on the practical part of *Module 1* and *Module 2* (50%).

1. The individual assessment (50%) will consist of a written test aimed to evaluate the knowledge and the ability to apply the topics explained during the course and in the reading list. In order to pass the individual assessment, students will have to get a mark of 18 or more.
2. The group project work (50%) will be carried out by students on the basis of the brief assigned in class by the lecturers. In order to pass the individual assessment, students will have to get a mark of 18 or more.

*Assessment criteria*

The individual written exam will consist of 30 questions of 1 point each (20 on *Module 1* 10 on *Module 2*), and students will be evaluated on their ability to find a correct answer to the questions; the group project work will be assessed on the basis of: the ability to follow, in a relevant and precise way, the instructions and the information provided (20%); the analysis (20%); the creativity and originality of the contents proposed (20%); the ability to present and find relevant arguments for their communication proposal (20%); the organisation and the graphic aspect of the final presentation (20%).

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

*Notes*

Class attendance is strongly recommended. The teaching material used during the course will be made available on Blackboard.

The students who do not have the possibility to attend classes regularly due to verifiable curricular reasons will have to contact the lecturer at the beginning of the year in order to define a supplementary or alternative reading list for the exam.

*Prerequisites*

Students are expected to have a basic knowledge of Excel. In addition, they should show a certain interest and attentive curiosity towards the use of data, and have a knowledge of the English language corresponding to the B2 level in order to be able to study the texts of the reading list.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.