

**Sample Syllabi – Subject to Change**  
**FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND SOCIAL MEDIA**  
**PARR 11600**

***Required Texts***

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Readings on Canvas

***Course Description***

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Social media presents a variety of current case studies in which to examine the tensions between freedom expression, private industry, and government regulation. The tensions exhibit in elections, politics, schools, employment, and our personal lives as we and social media companies learn to navigate this new landscape. This course explores the complexities of these issues from a basis in the theory, principles, and practices of free expression and their very tangible manifestations in personal, professional, and civic contexts. Students will read classical and current texts on freedom of expression, examine case law in free speech, and explore current controversies and statements and policies of social media organizations. At the same time, students will participate in a simulation of Congressional Hearings on social media regulations. Assuming roles as Senators, journalists, lobbyists, and leaders of social media organizations, students will actively bring their learning into practice by navigating the world of social media, politics, and policies.

***Learning Objectives***

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Students will:

1. Learn and actively utilize the principles, history, and practices of freedom of expression;
2. Develop abilities to critical examine texts, law, and discourse;
3. Actively engage in policy discussion and the political process; and
4. Improve communication skills—presentation, small group, discussion, and interpersonal skills.

***Course Requirements and Policies***

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- (1) ***Preparation.*** Students will come prepared to class with notes on assigned readings and ready to engage in discussion, exercises, and workshops.
- (2) ***Participation.*** Active engagement is essential for exploring freedom of expression. Each student will actively participate each day in discussions, exercises, workshops, and assignments. Students are expected to participate in class discussions of texts and cases as well as play an active role in the Congressional Hearing simulation. We will talk about the expectations for participation and actively work on developing individual and group skills in engaging with each other in productively.
- (3) ***Assignments.*** All written and oral assignments must be completed by the date assigned. No late assignments will be accepted.

- (4) **Plagiarism:** Students must document material drawn from other sources using the most recent citation guidelines from a recognized style manual. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any incident of plagiarism will result in a failing grade in the course.
- (5) **Technology Use:** This is a highly interactive and collaborative experience. We will be practicing face-to-face communication—interpersonal, group, and presentations—everyday in class, which requires that we also actively listen to each other. For all of us, that means no screens (phones, laptops, etc.) unless required for an activity or assignment.
- (6) **Assistance:** The professor will work with individual students and groups of students to ensure that students meet expectations and complete assignments. Please contact me with any concerns or issues.

### ***Participation***

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Each class period, students will productively participate in small group and large group discussions, workshops, exercises, and the simulation. Class discussion provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate comprehension of the material, apply concepts to your own experience, engage meaningful connections between this course and others, and practice concise, sophisticated oral communication. This summer immersive experience prepares students for class discussion and oral communication expectations in college, and, as such, guidelines, modeling, and feedback are all part of this course. Students are required to identify main points, explain main concepts, and provide relevant examples of the concepts and issues addressed in the readings.

### ***Assignments***

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#### **Project**

In groups, students will wrestle with the issues surrounding social media, including regulation, policies, mis/disinformation, social consequences, etc. Each group will develop and deliver a proposal to Congressional Hearings on social media. The audience will include Senators, social media executives, journalists, and the public.

#### **Issue Identification**

Each student will identify a relevant issue surrounding social media. The identification will include evidence of the issue's relevance, significance, and urgency. Each student will present their issue to the class.

#### **Issue Brief**

In groups, students will utilize research and evidence to develop a detailed issue brief. This brief will account for multiple perspectives on the issue and identify significant areas of disagreement.

#### **Proposal**

In the proposal, groups will identify possible ways to address the issue and make an evidence-based case for the best way for Congress to act to address the issue.

#### **Presentation**

Each group will present their proposal and be prepared to answer questions from Senators, social media executives, and journalists.



***Grading***

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Class Participation	20 points
Reading Reviews	10 points
Issue Identification	5 points
Issue Brief	20 points
Proposal	20 points
Presentation	20 points
Final Reflection	5 points
Total	100 points

***Grading Scale***

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A 94-100%	B+ 87-89%	C+ 77-79%	D+ 67-69%
A- 90-93%	B 84-86%	C 74-76%	D 63-66%
	B- 80-83%	C- 70-73%	F 0-63%

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*Students are responsible for the information in this syllabus. Refer to it regularly throughout the semester.  
The contents of this syllabus are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.*

Course Calendar

Topic	Readings Due	Workshop
Freedom of Expression	Demosthenes, <i>Freedom of Speech in Times of Danger</i> Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , 1859 Chicago Principles	Introduction to Project
First Amendment Jurisprudence	First Amendment Holmes, <i>Marketplace of Ideas</i> Holmes, <i>Clear and Present Danger</i>	Identifying Key Issues
Social Media and First Amendment	Section 230 and Analyses	Research, key issue discussion
Social Media hearings	2020 Congressional Hearings	Research <b>Issue Proposal Due</b> Individual Issue Speeches
International Perspectives	International case studies	Groups. Identify main issues and possible interventions
Public Sphere. Business-politics-access	Regulation, Corporate Policies, and Enforcement	Research <b>Issue Brief Due</b>
Mis/disinformation	Election 2020/COVID case studies	Plan ideas testing/presentation
Polarization/ex tremism	January 6 <sup>th</sup> case study	Research/Work <b>Proposal Draft Due</b>
Addiction/ Psychological Harms		Proposal revision/research/
Canceling, Silencing, and Journalism	International case Studies	Case Construction <b>Proposal Due</b>
<a href="#">Independence Day</a>		
Social Media and Schools	Current Cases	Presentation Preparation
Presentations	Presentations	Presentations

Review and Reflection What should be done?	Chicago Principles Dewey, <i>Freedom of Thought and Work</i> <i>AAUP Statement</i>	<b>Final Reflection</b>
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