

## **ASSIGNMENT, PART I**

### **Semester Blog Project**

In this class you'll wear multiple hats. First, as all University Writing students do, you'll take on the roles of scholar and critic, in our case examining the rhetoric of social media as it is used for selling and promoting products, organizations, people, and causes. Your other role, however, is unique to this class: Social Media Expert/For-Hire Consultant. Through this blog, you will both analyze and actively engage with social media writing in your chosen field or industry as you consider the rhetorical situation as it applies both to the marketing efforts of organizations and to your own academic work.

#### **Your Area of Expertise**

In this new role, you will choose a related group of three individuals, companies, movements, or organizations that are active in social media, and you will track, analyze, and critique their marketing or promotion efforts over the course of the semester. For instance, you might choose to examine a group of cosmetic companies or a chain of coffee shops. Those interested in policy and politics might follow individual politicians or lobbying groups. You could follow churches or food brands, or you could track celebrities working to create and maintain a brand or authors promoting new books, or perhaps sports teams or airlines, venture capital firms or yoga studios. You will post analyses and comparisons of these campaigns, along with related posts, on your individual blog.

In choosing, you should consider the following qualifications: The organizations/causes/people you choose to follow must have an active (though not necessarily effective!) social media presence. This means that you must demonstrate that each of campaigns you're tracking uses at least two forms of social media (FB and Twitter, for example, or they have YouTube channel and they utilize Pinterest) at least twice weekly. Further, you should consider variety in your choices. While the organizations you track must be related, they should be diverse within an industry, as we are going to be comparing and contrasting. For instance, following Coke, Pepsi, and Mountain Dew (three huge brands with similar budgets, with very similar target buyers) would likely not yield analysis that furthers the larger dialogue. However, an examination of Pepsi alongside of World Classics (a European soda company), and a small, regional organic soda producer would likely have more at stake and allow you to explore with more nuance.

#### **The Blog**

Your audience for the blog is organizations or companies in your chosen field or industry who are looking to better understand social media. A secondary audience is other social media consultants. The rhetorical choices you make in writing your blog will be dependent on these audiences, but also on other factors. For instance, tone and level of formality will vary based upon audience, of course, but also upon your subject. If you are studying social media in the world of stand-up comedy or reality television, your tone and level of formality will likely be quite different from a

classmate who is working in the hedge fund or political realm. (Note: In week one, you will write a short post about the rhetorical situation of your blog).

As experts in the rhetoric of selling with social media, in addition to exploring the campaigns of your three chosen organizations, you will use your blog to respond to the ideas of other experts in the field and analyze academic articles. You will also occasionally address the rhetoric of campaigns outside of their chosen industry. Posts will address a variety of topics (and varying degrees of “meta-ness”). Below, you’ll see two typical blog post prompts, but full instructions for each week are included in the syllabus.

Sample post prompts:

1. **The Weekly Round-up:** Write a comparison/contrast post of the three social media campaigns you’re following. What did each organization (or individual, etc.) do on social media this week? What was especially interesting (or not)? What venues did they employ? What rhetorical appeals did they rely upon? What audiences do you think they were attempting to reach, and toward what goals or purposes? How can you tell? You should provide in-depth analysis for at least one specific example from each individual or organization, and you should include images and/or screen shots when you are analyzing visuals. Finally, you should note whether there was a stand out among the three for best (or worst) this week. **NOTE:** Weekly round-ups vary in length, but a good average to aim for is between 1,000 and 1,400 words.
2. Choose a social media post (a FB update or link, a Tweet, a “pin,” etc.) from your “least effective” organization. Describe it and, being as specific as possible, and then perform a rhetorical analysis of the post. You might consider the following questions to get your mind moving in the right direction: What is the purpose of this social media campaign overall? How does this post fit in? What surprises, perplexes, or interests you about this post? Is it more image driven or word driven? What clues here hint at its intended audience and the advertiser’s assumptions about that audience? Does the ad contain a logo or slogan? If so, in what way does it contribute? What kinds of rhetorical appeals are used in an attempt to persuade the consumer? Is it ultimately effective?

### **Logistics**

One free, easy to use blog program that I would highly recommend is Wordpress, as this platform is incredibly versatile and could be potentially useful to you in the future. You will find Wordpress tutorial videos posted on our class website, along with suggestions for getting started. If you choose to use another platform, that’s okay too, though. And if you’re particularly web savvy and want to create a web site for your blog, or you choose to customize your blog, that’s great, but if not, don’t worry—you’re only being graded on the writing.

## ASSIGNMENT, PART II

### Semester Project Prompt

#consultants #socialmediarockstars

#thesearegoingtobeawesome

### Learning Goals

- Convey an understanding of social media marketing principles
- Find and explore resources, read them critically, use them successfully as support, and cite them correctly
- Ask sound questions and think analytically, critically examining beliefs and assumptions
- Manage time, schedule, and resources effectively
- Work collaboratively
- Use technology as a tool for both communication and credibility
- Develop, support, position, reposition, and present a sound argument, while anticipating and addressing questions and counterarguments
- Utilize rhetorical principles as a way to tailor communication for purpose and genre, audience, structure, tone, level of formality, and document design
- Write and revise significantly through multiple drafts, considering outside feedback
- Edit and proofread carefully to ensure the presentation of an error-free final product

### Overview

Your final project draws together many of the skills and concepts you've been building throughout the semester and asks you to implement not only your content knowledge, but also your critical thinking and writing skills in a complex, multi-step assignment. We will work through this project in stages, discussing, brainstorming, writing, considering feedback, and revising. Further, the work you will complete for this project utilizes, builds on, and asks you to reconfigure many of the smaller writing assignments you've completed, both on your blog and in class.

### The Scenario

Congratulations! Based on your insightful and engaging blog, as well as the industry-specific expertise you've demonstrated, you've been hired as a consultant with Social Media Rock Stars, a start-up social media marketing firm. Details on your first big project are below.

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**From:** Taylor “Your Boss” Taylorson <taylor@socialmediarockstars.com>

**Date:** Tue, October 15, 2016 at 10:46 AM

**Subject:** Info for upcoming client project/presentation

**To:** You <you@socialmediarockstars.com>

Greetings -

I’m writing with good news! One of the organizations/individuals whose social media presence you’ve been tracking (amazing coincidence, no?) has put out a call for a consultant to critique their current campaign and implement a new, more effective social media marketing plan. You’re in charge of the proposal and presentation that will convince them that we know social media, their field, and what works in it.

One complication is that the company calling for presentations/proposals has had so little success with social media that they’re not even 100% convinced using it is worthwhile. So, you’re not only selling yourself and your ideas, but you also have to make a case for why this type of marketing is so crucial in their field. Also, remember that you are an expert, meaning you are doing the work your clients can’t/won’t do, like deciphering complex material that could potentially help them. To that end, you should include some scholarly research (and it would be tough to be convincing in this realm with fewer than 10-12 sources). This might come in the form of examining the psychology of buyers, taking a more in-depth look at industry economics, or even looking at interesting cases or studies that the organization might reframe as content for their social media outreach. What you research is up to you and will be determined by your industry/field, but you must make a convincing, supported argument for the organization to move forward with you as their consultant. (Your research will be a combination of scholarly and popular sources, and it will also call on individual Facebook posts, Tweets, etc.)

The proposal isn’t due for another two months, but obviously you’ll want to get started on this ASAP. As you plan, you should consider the following deliverables:

- **Annotated Bibliography**—I’d like you to submit to me well before to the presentation an annotated bibliography of at least five sources you plan to use in your proposal. We want to show our expertise as well as our research ability, so this should include at least four scholarly sources. The annotated bibliography will give you an opportunity to begin to examine the sources you’ve found for your proposal for relevance and validity, and map out your project plan in terms of both your research and the writing. For each source, you should summarize, address credibility issues (of publication, author, bias in writing, etc.), state the article’s limitations, and note how this source might contribute to your proposal as a whole. Each annotation should be approximately 100-150 words

each. Creating an annotated bibliography requires several critical thinking and writing skills: describing, summarizing, and analyzing, most notably. Examining and evaluating sources is difficult work. As you write, you should keep in mind the following questions: *What is the author's main point? Is it logical? Does he or she support it? Where did I find this source? Is it from a "legitimate" publication? Is the writing unbiased? Who is the author and what are his or her credentials? What issues or limitations are at play here? What is the overall quality of the writing, as I see it?* You will need to have each of your sources cited in MLA format. (See attached sample.)

- **Proposal** – (Note: You've already written about a lot of this in blog form, so part of the writing here will be rethinking the material for different audiences and purposes.) The proposal will include:
  - **Cover page**
  - **Executive summary**—This will likely be the last thing you write, and it should provide an overview of your arguments and a run-down of the information included in the proposal. (1 paragraph, on its own page)
  - **Introduction and Background**—This section (approximately 3-4 pages):
    - introduces you as a consultant, including relevant credentials
    - provides a concise statement that signifies your understanding of the company or organization, including their goals, pertinent history, and/or any issues they are working against
    - clearly states the purpose of the campaign you are proposing (Is it to sell? To raise donations? To inform? To create a better/different image or brand? To attract a new audience? Some combination of these?)
    - provides an audience assessment - who is the organization's current target audience? How can you tell? Is this, in fact, who they should be targeting? Explore the demographics of the audience in the context of the campaign's purpose.
    - begins to make a case for your ideas by introducing the ideas in your proposal at large while placing these ideas in a larger context by introducing "conversation partners" who have written about this industry or discipline as well as those who have written about social media marketing. You want to introduce your reader to who they'll be hearing from throughout the proposal as well as demonstrate to the reader that you know the field at large.
  - **Case for employing social media**—Why use social media in this field, for this audience, towards these goals? This section should include outside research (approximately 1-2 pages)
  - **Competitive research overview**—What are other organizations doing effectively (or not) in this field, using specific examples and "mini-analyses" (approximately 3-4 pages)
  - **Critique of current campaign**—Specifically, what have they have been doing that is not working and why (approximately 2-3 pages)

- **Overview of the proposed campaign**—An exploration of the social media avenues they should be pursuing and a sampling of status updates, tweets, calls for a response or user-generated content, etc. and why these will be effective. This section should also include research and address potential counterarguments. (anywhere from 4-6 pages; organization up to you, and subheads for readability and images or screenshots are encouraged—be sure to focus on what will be easiest/most effective for the client)
- **Works cited**—MLA style

\*NOTE: page counts are approximate, and are counted by double-spaced pages, although for the final version, you may choose to format/space any way you like.

- **Presentation of 8-10 minutes** – Organization is up to you, but the presentation should address each element in the proposal and make a strong case for the organization to hire you as a consultant; also, the audience for this presentation will be both high-level and low-level employees in the organization’s marketing department, including some who have been managing their current social media work, so diplomacy is key. These are very busy people, so you must stay within the time frame. Also, for the presentation, you will need to use some form of presentation technology (PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, etc.).
- **Wrap-up email** – Finally, be sure to email me and let me know how the presentation goes within a day or two after your presentation. A casual email will be fine, but be sure to be detailed and specific, and address the following questions: What was the process like for this project? How did it evolve over time? How and why did you make your most important decisions? Were they good ones? Were the project and the presentation, in your opinion, ultimately successful? Why or why not? What would you do differently next time? In what ways did this project force you to think critically about social media and argument? Also, please let me know how the collaboration element went (how, specifically, it improved your project, how each team member contributed, and how providing feedback to the rest of your group shaped your own thinking, as well as any issues or concerns you ran into during the collaboration). In this email you should also send me the file or link to your presentation file.

The proposal should, of course, look professional, and I would recommend using screenshots to break up the text and illustrate some of your points. These will probably be particularly relevant in the competitive research overview and your critique of their current campaign.

All of our consultants are really busy right now, so, to help, I’m grouping you and two other colleagues as team. You’ll conceptualize the proposed campaign, write the proposal, and present on your own, but as you work through the project, you’ll have this team to support you and provide feedback (and you’ll do the same for them). You should plan to meet with your

team several times, and as a group you'll all convene with me at least once to discuss your campaigns and progress. (We will discuss scheduling at our next staff meeting, but in the meantime, I've set up a folder for your team on the department [class] site.)

Remember, you're making an overarching argument here that a.) You're an expert, and b.) You can help this organization. These ideas should guide you ask as you get started and as you write and revise. This is a big project, and the deliverables are obviously going to require multiple drafts, but you're prepared, and I know you'll be professional. Let me know if you have any questions, and good luck!

Taylor

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