

**NRM 5323 – Social Media & Outreach**  
**Course Syllabus – Summer Session II 2024**

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**Course Information**

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**Instructor**

Dr. Amanda Veals Dutt (she/her/hers)  
[Amanda.dutt@sulross.edu](mailto:Amanda.dutt@sulross.edu)  
480-353-6409 (cell, 9-5 daily, can text/call)

**Office Hours**

Tuesday 11:00am-12:00pm CT  
Wednesday 10:00-12:00pm CT  
Or by appointment

**Class Meeting Time/Place**

This is an online class with readings from the course texts that replace formal lectures. Blackboard will be used for all announcements, discussions, assignments, and grades.

**Course Description**

This is an advanced course on the principles and practices of public communication. Topics covered will include educational outreach and scientific communication using multiple forms of media.

**Expanded Course Description**

Many students and professionals enter into the natural resources field due to a love of wildlife and wild places. We don't often think of just how much of this profession relies on communicating with the public, partnering with stakeholders, and outreach to improve coexistence of people and wildlife. Conservation education through outreach helps people of all ages understand and appreciate our world's natural resources and ecosystems while learning how to conserve them for future generations. Effective outreach efforts lead to increased public support for measures initiated to protect natural areas and habitats. Successful communication ensures that information, services, and programs reach all stakeholders and partners in natural resources field.

Educating the public and communicating results to stakeholders and funders through non-traditional formats, such as scientific journals or textbooks, are a much more effective means of securing long-term results for collaborative conservation efforts. There are many forms of outreach, but social media has rapidly grown in importance for scientific education and public communication in the natural resources field. While a useful tool, social media can also have many drawbacks.

This course will teach you about the importance of successful outreach, effective communication, and functional media campaigns in the natural resources field and society as a whole. This class will help prepare students to meet the challenges of conveying scientific information to a wide range of audiences.

## Course Objectives

Students will learn the art and science of conservation outreach through multiple platforms, including social media. Specifically, upon course completion students shall have an understanding of:

1. How to identify and define the goals of an outreach campaign
2. How to tailor outreach to a target audience
3. Strategies for effective outreach
4. Techniques for outreach including social media

## Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to extract important scientific facts from traditional sources for synthesis into an outreach campaign
2. Student will be able to produce an effective social media post that communicates important scientific knowledge
3. Students will be able to critically examine the effectiveness of an outreach campaign

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## Course Materials and Policies

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### Textbooks

*No required textbook is needed for this course. Any reading materials will be provided on Blackboard as PDFs. Any other reference material (such as podcasts) will be available for download on Blackboard.*

### Grading

Weekly discussions (4 @ 50 points each)	200 points
Press Release	100 points
Outreach Campaign	200 points

### Grades

A: 89.5 – 100%
B: 79.5 – 89.4%
C: 69.5 – 79.4%
D: 59.5 – 69.4%
F: < 59.4%

### Due Dates and Extensions

This course is structured into weekly time periods (modules) that begin on Monday and end on Sunday. All assignments are due by Sunday at 11:59pm Central Time, unless otherwise specified. **No due dates for ANY graded work will be extended and no points will be given for late assignments except under extraordinary circumstances.** The student must initiate contact with the instructor to request an exception for late work. See the class schedule (posted in Blackboard) for the dates and assignments for each week.

### Major Assignments and Examinations

#### *Media Posts*

Throughout the semester, several forms of media posts (interviews, podcast, press releases, magazine articles, and social media posts) will be posted on Blackboard. Each media will be

available for download under the weekly media heading on Blackboard. Please watch/listen/read each media post for the week it is assigned. These will be fundamental to your participation and success in the weekly discussions.

### *Weekly Discussions*

Each week a Discussion Board will be posted to Blackboard for student participation. Each student should participate in the forum and each posting will be graded based upon the relevance, depth of knowledge, and unique contribution that it made to the discussion. For each discussion board, you will need to make your own original post (by Thursday), as well as comment on posts by other students or instructors (by Sunday). You must make these postings during the week in which it was scheduled. Please make your first initial post (original post) by Thursday of the week it is scheduled. You then have until Sunday to respond to other posts. You should reply to more than 2 other student posts to facilitate discussion and receive maximum credit. You will not receive credit for late postings.

### *Press Release*

You will summarize a scientific paper on a topic of your choosing in the form of a press release. The topic must relate to the natural resources profession and be from an article in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. You will summarize the important details of the paper in a manner that is suitable for press release. A detailed rubric for this assignment can be found on Blackboard.

### *Outreach Campaign*

During the semester, you will be working on an outreach assignment on a topic of your choosing. The topic must relate to the natural resources profession (e.g., bear getting into trash, breeding bird nests on the beach, spread of white-nose syndrome in caves). The topic must be based on a real world scenario and will be due at the end of the semester. A detailed rubric for the assignment can be found on Blackboard.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden.

### **General Expectations**

As this is a graduate-level course, I have high expectations for all students. I expect quality, graduate-level writing and that you will seek assistance from the university help center on writing projects if needed. I will provide you with prompt and meaningful feedback on your assignments.

Some of the topics we discuss in this course may be contentious and there will probably be many different points of view amongst the class. As we cover these topics, I expect you to:

- Treat your classmates with respect, even if you do not agree with their viewpoints
- Defend your own opinions with logical rhetoric and not fallacies
- Avoid all ad hominem attacks, insults, or other derogatory comments against a person

You can expect the instructors to:

- Serve as a moderator
- Provide current scientific information
- Articulate where science ends and policy or opinion begin
- Remain neutral in most discussions; if I give an opinion, you can expect me to show the same respect that I expect from you.

### **Communication**

You are required to check your ***Sul Ross e-mail and Blackboard announcements several times per week***. I do not use the personal or preferred e-mail addresses that you may have on record with the University.

### **SRSU Distance Education Statement**

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

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### **Resources**

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#### **SRSU Disability Services (ADA Statement)**

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Alpine Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartz, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203, or email [mschwartz@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartz@sulross.edu). Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall – room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine. Texas, 79832.

### **Counseling Services**

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) has partnered with TimelyCare, which is an online mental health support platform, and all SRSU students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. These can be accessed by visiting <https://timelycare.com/srsu>. Counseling is also offered in Ferguson Hall Room 112 in Alpine, and via telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students.

### **Library Information**

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, [library.sulross.edu](http://library.sulross.edu). Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or phone (432-837-8123).

### **Tutoring**

If you need help with writing, please contact Graduate Student Support Services: [gradcenter@sulross.edu](mailto:gradcenter@sulross.edu) or (432) 837-8524.

### **Blackboard Support Desk**

If you have any technical issues with Blackboard itself, the Blackboard Support Desk is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can reach the support desk by calling (888) 837-6055, emailing [blackboardsupport@sulross.edu](mailto:blackboardsupport@sulross.edu), using resources from the Technology Support tab within Blackboard, or clicking the Support Desk graphic on the course homepage.

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### **Tentative Course Schedule**

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*Subject to change, please check Blackboard for updates.*

<b>Week</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Due This Week</b>
Module 1: The Importance of Outreach	7/8 – 7/14	Discussion 1
Module 2: Your Audience and Goals	7/15 – 7/21	Discussion 2, Press Release
Module 3: Outreach	7/22 – 7/28	Discussion 3, Outreach Campaign-Topic Selection
Module 4: Social Media	7/29 – 8/4	Discussion 4, Outreach Campaign-Draft Materials
Module 5: Review	8/5 – 8/12	Outreach Campaign-Final Materials