

# NRM 5323 – Social Media & Outreach

## Course Syllabus – Summer Session II 2026

### Communicating Scientific Information

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### Course Information

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**Instructor**

Mrs. Cindi Meche

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Cell: 858.232.8624 (9-5, M-F, text/call)

**Office Hours**

Wednesday 11:00 am-12:00pm

Thursday 11:00-12:00pm 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, project-based course that explores the principles and practices of public communication for scientific outreach. Topics covered will include a range of media, as well as communication formats and platforms.

Many people enter the natural resources field because of a passion for wildlife and wild places, yet the profession relies heavily on public communication, stakeholder partnerships, and outreach to promote human–wildlife coexistence. Conservation outreach helps people of all ages understand, appreciate, and protect natural resources, while building support for habitat and conservation initiatives. Effective communication ensures that information, services, and programs reach diverse audiences and partners.

Sharing results through accessible, non-traditional formats, rather than solely scientific journals or textbooks, is often more effective for achieving long-term conservation outcomes. Among outreach tools, social media has become increasingly important for scientific education and public engagement, though it also presents challenges.

This course explores the role of outreach, communication, and media campaigns in natural resources, preparing students to effectively convey scientific information to diverse audiences.

**Course Objectives**

*What students will do in the course.*

Students will learn the art and science of conservation outreach through applied activities across multiple platforms, including social media. By the end of the course, students will:

- Develop goals and strategies for an outreach campaign.
- Identify and profile target audiences and stakeholders.
- Create outreach content for multiple platforms, including social media.
- Translate scientific information into accessible, public-facing formats.
- Analyze and evaluate the performance of outreach campaigns.

## Student Learning Outcomes

*What students will know and understand.*

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain core principles and best practices of scientific communication and outreach.
- Describe how audience, platform, and message influence communication effectiveness.
- Understand methods for synthesizing scientific information for public communication.
- Recognize key components of effective outreach materials and media strategies.
- Interpret metrics and audience feedback to assess communication success.

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## Course Materials and Policies

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### Textbooks

*No textbook is required for this course. Any required materials will be provided on Blackboard.*

### Grading

The class is structured into weekly modules that start on Monday and conclude on Sunday. All weekly discussions and assignments are due on Sunday at 11:59 p.m. CST. The course grading will be based on the percentage of points earned, based on the quality of submission for the content outlined below.

Post Week 1 and two comments	30 points
Post Week 2 and two comments	30 points
Post Week 3 and two comments	30 points
One-on-one meeting	30 points
Post Week 4 and two comments	30 points
Final Project:	
Media submission X 3	150 points
Pitch presentation	100 points
Communication strategy	100 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500 POINTS</b>

**Grade Scale: 90-100% = A; 80-89% = B; 70-79% = C; 60-69% = D.**

### Breakdown

- *Participation and Engagement*  
Participation constitutes 30% (150 points) of the final grade. This includes participating in the post-prompt and engaging in meaningful dialogue with your peers. This requires a post and at least 2 responses to other students' posts. This also includes scheduling a one-on-one check-in meeting with me in week 3.
- *Outreach Campaign (Final Project)*  
The final project for the course will account for 70% (350 points) of your final grade. Students can select a topic for this assignment that must relate to the natural resources profession (e.g., bears overlapping human space due to attractants, the impact of throwing an apple core out of a vehicle window, or woody plant encroachment threatens native grasslands in west Texas) or propose one of their own.

The final product must include a media campaign for community outreach, a project timeline, 3 media examples, and a 3-minute pitch presentation. The final project will be evaluated based on its originality, depth of analysis, and ability to communicate complex ideas effectively to the target audience, and will be due in the last week 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. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaboration 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 myself or the university help center on writing projects if needed.

Some of the topics we discuss in this course may be contentious and there may be different points of view within 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 character attacks, insults, or other derogatory comments against a person

You can expect the instructor to:

- Serve as a moderator and remain neutral in discussions
- Provide current information
- If I give an opinion, I will extend the same respect that I expect from you

### **Communication**

Students are required to correspond using **Sul Ross e-mail** accounts and submit online assignments through **Blackboard**, which requires secure login. I will not use personal 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 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.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Activities Due By Sunday</b>
Module 1: Foundations of Scientific Communication	7/6 – 7/12	Knowledge Check, Discussion 1
Module 2: Formalizing A Campaign Strategy	7/13 – 7/19	Knowledge Check, Discussion 2
Module 3: Media Development	7/20 – 7/26	Knowledge Check, Discussion 3, Campaign Strategy Draft
Module 4: Campaign Evaluation	7/27 – 8/2	Knowledge Check, Discussion 4, 1 of 3 Media Pieces for feedback
Module 5: Final Project Development	8/3 – 8/9	Final Project: - Campaign Strategy Document - 3 Media Pieces - 3-minute Presentation/Pitch

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

### **Due Dates and Extensions**

**due dates for graded work will not be extended, and no points will be given for late assignments except under approved extenuating circumstances.** The student must initiate contact with the instructor to request an exception for late work. See the class schedule (posted in Blackboard) for due dates and assignments for each week.

### **Resources**

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

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with documented disabilities may receive reasonable accommodations but must request them each semester for each class.

To request services, contact Mary Schwartz, Accessibility Services Coordinator:  
432-837-8203 | [mschwartz@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartz@sulross.edu) | Ferguson Hall, Room 112 (Alpine)

#### **Counseling Services**

SRSU partners with TimelyCare, providing students with nine free online counseling sessions:  
<https://timelycare.com/srsu>

In-person counseling is also available in Ferguson Hall, Room 112, as well as via Zoom for remote students.

#### **Library Information**

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library offers all SRSU students free access to books, articles, and more at [library.sulross.edu](http://library.sulross.edu) (login required for off-campus access). Librarians are available

in person, by email ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or by phone (432-837-8123).

### **Tutoring**

For writing support, contact Graduate Student Support Services:

[gradcenter@sulross.edu](mailto:gradcenter@sulross.edu) | (432) 837-8524

### **Blackboard Support Desk**

Blackboard support is available 24/7 through the Technology Support tab in Blackboard or (888) 837-6055 | [blackboardsupport@sulross.edu](mailto:blackboardsupport@sulross.edu)