UNIVERSITÉ LYON 3
JEAN MOULIN

SELF PROGRAM

2026/2027

Digital Culture & Communication: IDENTITY, INFLUENCE, AND BRAND STORYTELLING

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Course information

Number of credits: 6 credits

Contact hours: 30 hours

Hours taught per week: 2,5 hours or 3 hours

Teaching period: Spring 2027

Course description

How does digital culture shape what people notice, believe, share, and expect from organizations? This course examines the relationship between digital technology, human behavior, brand strategy and communication—examining identity, attention, algorithms, creators, communities, and the changing meaning of authenticity and trust.

Through analysis of brand campaigns from different markets, discussion, and practical workshops, students develop a team project that integrates brand strategy, storytelling, channel choices, responsible communication, and meaningful measures of effectiveness.

The course also examines AI's role in creativity and communication, emphasizing human judgment and responsible practice.

Course outline

Session 1: Digital Culture and Everyday Life

Guiding question: How has being online changed how we live and communicate?

- What digital culture means.
- How platforms influence behavior and expectations.
- Participation, sharing, and digital habits.
- The relationship between people, platforms, and organizations.

Introduce the course project and assessment requirements.

Session 2: Identity, Belonging, and Community

Guiding question: What does belonging mean online?

- Digital identity and self-presentation.
- Communities, shared interests, and group norms.
- Participation, belonging, and exclusion.
- How organizations enter and interact with communities.

Session 3: Attention, Algorithms, and Visibility

Guiding question: Why do we notice, remember, and share some messages?

- Attention as a limited resource.
- How recommendation systems influence visibility.
- Emotion, relevance, and sharing.
- The difference between visibility and persuasive effectiveness.

Session 4: Trust, Authenticity, and Influence

Guiding question: Who do we believe, and why?

- Expertise and credibility.
- Creators, influencers, and sponsorship.
- Social proof.
- Authenticity and misinformation.
- How communication builds or damages trust.

Session 5: Brands as Cultural Participants

Guiding question: When does a brand become part of culture?

- Cultural relevance.
- Brand values and public expectations.
- Humor and cultural interpretation.
- Appropriation, backlash, and reputation.
- Global consistency and local relevance.

Session 6: Audience Insight and Strategic Purpose

Guiding question: What is the real communication problem to solve?

- Observation versus insight.

- Audience motivations and barriers.
- Communication problems and opportunities.
- Clear objectives.
- The purpose of a creative brief.

Session 7: Storytelling and Memorable Ideas

Guiding question: What makes an idea clear, meaningful, and memorable?

- The relationship between strategy and creative ideas.
- Central messages.
- Narrative and storytelling.
- Specificity, credibility, and emotion.

Session 8: Content, Channels, and Experience

Guiding question: How does one idea work across different contexts?

- Adapting content while maintaining a coherent idea.
- Tone and platform conventions.
- The role of each communication channel.
- Online and offline integration.
- B2B and B2C applications.

Session 9: AI, Creativity, and Human Judgment

Guiding question: What should we delegate, and what should we create and decide ourselves?

- AI-assisted research, ideation, and writing.
- What makes a useful prompt.
- Generic output versus relevant creative work.
- Verification, bias, and originality.
- Human editing and accountability.

Session 10: Responsibility, Effectiveness, and Revision

Guiding question: What does good communication achieve, and at what cost?

- Transparency and privacy.
- Inclusive communication.
- Sustainability and substantiated claims.
- Matching KPIs to communication objectives.
- Using results to guide decisions.

Team Project Presentations

Teams present and defend their communication concepts and strategy.

Each student has a speaking role and explains their contribution.

Session 11: Team Project Presentations

Teams present and defend their communication concepts and strategy.

Each student has a speaking role and explains their contribution.

Session 12: Individual Written Case Assessment

Students apply course concepts independently to a supplied case.

- Two-hour written assessment.

Prerequisites

None required.

Students should be open to examining their own cultural assumptions and willing to participate actively in discussions, group activities, case studies, and practical exercises.

Course objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Explain how digital platforms, attention systems, and participation shape identity, culture, and communication.
2. Analyze how creators, communities, and organizations build influence and trust.
3. Interpret communication in different cultural contexts and identify assumptions requiring evidence.
4. Assess brand positioning, differentiation, promise, and coherence; develop an audience insight and brand strategy that guide communication objectives, messages, and storytelling.
5. Justify content and channel choices and select relevant measures of effectiveness.
6. Evaluate AI-assisted communication for quality, accuracy, bias, originality, and relevance.
7. Incorporate transparency, privacy, inclusion, and responsible claims into communication decisions.

Assessment

40%: Team project and presentation

Teams analyze an assigned brand and develop a communication strategy integrating audience insight, storytelling, channel choices, responsible communication, and relevant KPIs. Each student contributes to the presentation and answers questions.

50%: Individual written assessment

A two-hour, in-class case assessment evaluating students' ability to analyze brand communication and develop justified strategic recommendations.

10%: Participation and attendance

Attendance

In order to participate, students must be present. Nevertheless, a maximum of 2 (two) unexcused absences will be allowed; otherwise, no mark will be given. An unexcused absence at a test (final test or continuous assessment) means no credits for the course.

Bibliography

- Heath, Chip, and Dan Heath. *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die.*
- Signorelli, Jim. *StoryBranding 2.0: Creating Standout Brands Through the Power of Story.*

- Suleyman, Mustafa, with Michael Bhaskar. *The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the Twenty-first Century's Greatest Dilemma.*
- Hari, Johann. *Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention—and How to Think Deeply Again.*
- Mollick, Ethan. *Co-Intelligence: Living and Working with AI.*
- Chayka, Kyle. *Filterworld: How Algorithms Flattened Culture.*
- Hayes, Chris. *The Sirens' Call: How Attention Became the World's Most Endangered Resource.*