



SOCIAL MEDIA VIDEO

FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

SCHOLARSHIP LEARNING COMMUNITY

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Introduction

➤ RATIONALE

**To empower
faculty to enter the
public intellectual
discourse on
social media**

Scholarship Learning Community

For all its (many) problems, social media provides a fertile soil for the exchange of ideas. More work by a wider range of people is now being done in the public intellectual space than perhaps ever before. Our students are certainly immersed in the world of YouTube video essays, Instagram reels, and TikToks. And yet faculty's voices are often missing from this conversation. This Scholarship Learning Community brought together faculty from multiple disciplines across the university to explore what ideas were being shared on social media in their areas, how they were being conveyed, why faculty might not be part of these discussions, and how faculty could join in.

Contents

01 Use Cases.....	01
02 Social Media Video Introduction.....	02
03 Platforms Overview	03
04 Do You Really Want to Be a Content Creator?.....	05
05 Creating Videos	06
06 Technical Skills	08
07 Protecting Yourself as a Social Media Creator.....	10
08 Works Cited	11
09 Appendix	12

Use Cases

There are two major use cases we discovered for academic social media videos.

Contribute to online discussion of your subject area

This is the use case we imagined when we began this project. Academics can intervene in conversations related to their expertise in order to raise the level of discourse and spread knowledge at a time when misinformation runs rampant. We know that students often use web sources when searching for information to help them on course assignments, and use of social media video services (particularly YouTube) for this purpose is on the rise (Khatri, 2021; Kim et al., 2011, 2014, 2021). If this is where our students are looking for information, it is important for academics to find a way to get their knowledge out there.

However, it is important to note that this use case requires a serious commitment of resources and entanglement with the algorithmic strictures of these platforms (see “Do You Really Want to Be a Content Creator?”).

Create materials for other professors to use in their classes

As a group, we discovered that an additional use case for social media video by academics was creating materials that other professors could use in their classes. This use case is particularly well-suited to series that explore basic concepts and theories in particular disciplines. But videos that analyze provocative examples or contemporary news and relate them to an academic field could also work in this context.

Creating this kind of video has the advantage of distancing us from social media algorithms, as the videos could be shared via existing academic communication channels like mailing lists, academic societies, flyers at conferences, etc. However, it decreases the chance that students will find these videos on their own and runs the risk of creating social media accounts that appear to be “dead”—ie not having posted recently and continuously—which can be detrimental to a scholar’s public profile.

Social Media Video Introduction

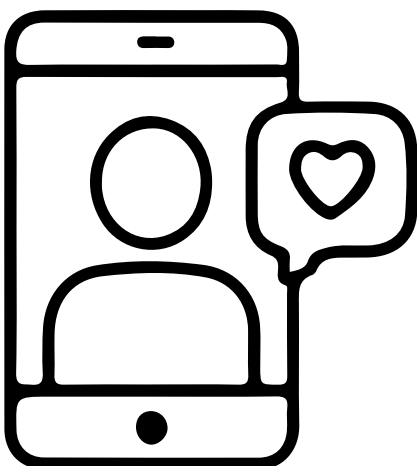
General Overview

Each social media platform has its own system for operating in terms of what its videos look like, how long they last, and what algorithms work behind the scenes to recommend videos to users. Horizontally oriented videos are typically in a 16:9 aspect ratio, while vertically oriented videos are typically in a 9:16 aspect ratio. Because the algorithms change over time, if you're interested in discoverability via those algorithms, we recommend you check current guides like those published by Sprout Social.

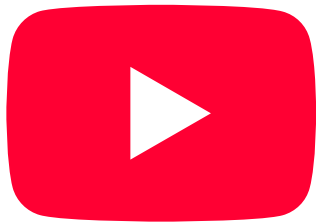
Long-form versus Short-form Videos

There are two main types of social media videos: long-form (a few minutes to several hours) and short-form (typically 30 seconds to 3 minutes).

Long-form platforms (ie YouTube) and all of the short-form platforms are notably different in how audiences encounter videos. Short-form video is typically designed for audiences who are scrolling through a feed and might encounter something randomly, while long-form video is typically designed for audiences who are searching for a topic intentionally. You might think of short-form videos as answering a student's question, while long-form videos are like delivering a guest lecture. Creators will often use the two together, excerpting short pieces from a longer video to use as shorts or creating shorts that spark interest in a topic and mentioning (and linking) that there is a longer video exploring the topic on YouTube.



Platforms Overview



YouTube

YouTube is the largest video-sharing platform. It focuses on long-form video with horizontal orientations.

Videos are presented one at a time, though there are typically “recommended” videos at the end of each video. Creators can build ongoing relationships with their audiences by encouraging them to subscribe, like, and comment on videos as well as set up notifications for when the creator posts (though these can be unreliable).

Creators can monetize their accounts by joining the YouTube Partners Program.



YouTube Shorts

YouTube Shorts is YouTube’s answer to TikTok and Instagram Reels. It focuses on short-form, vertical video.

Videos are presented in a continuous scrolling feed so users can quickly click from one to the next.

Creators can monetize their accounts by joining the YouTube Partners Program.



Instagram

Instagram is a social media platform that mixes images and video.

Posts are typically still images that appear in a user's profile grid and in the feeds of people who follow that user; multiple images can be included in a single post (called a carousel). "Reels" are short, vertical video posts.

Instagram "Stories" are temporary images or videos that disappear after 24 hours unless the creator chooses to save them as "Highlights" on their profile. Stories appear at the top of the Instagram app instead of within the main feed and are often interactive (ie polls, question boxes, quizzes, etc).

Creators can build ongoing relationships with their audiences by encouraging them to like, comment, and follow their accounts.



TikTok

TikTok is a social media platform built on short, vertical videos.

Videos are presented in a continuous scrolling feed and typically auto-play. They are recommended to users based on a highly personalized algorithm that curates a "FYP" (For You Page).

The platform has a notably unique culture, with trends, memes, and participatory challenges. Part of this stems from the fact that TikTok includes fairly sophisticated editing tools within the app, so users often use the same visual effects, text overlays, etc. TikTok also has unique interactive features called Duet (which allow users to record a video alongside another creator's video, to be shown in split-screen) and Stitch (which enables users to incorporate a short segment of another person's video into their own).

Users tend to follow individual creators somewhat less on TikTok, with the emphasis leaning more towards discovering trending videos.

Do You Really Want to Be a Content Creator?



TIME COMMITMENT

"Content creator" is a full-time job—or, at least, it requires the hours of one. While a low-quality video can be filmed and posted quickly, high-quality content requires a significant investment of time.

Even very short-form videos like TikToks or Instagram reels take multiple (5–8) hours when scripting, filming, editing, and posting are all taken into consideration. Longer-form content like YouTube video essays generally take weeks to produce.

Beyond a single video, if we are interested in being discoverable on the social media platforms, it is essential to publish a continuous stream of content. For long-form, it is generally recommended to publish a video every 2 weeks to 1 month or, if the video is very long (multi-hour), every 1 to 3 months. For short-form content, it is recommended to post 3–5 times per week or even daily.

For academics with an eye to a tenure clock or adjunct faculty with multiple jobs, setting aside this kind of time is hard. It is better to go in with eyes open, knowing how long this work is likely to take, than to begin with unrealistic expectations and then burn yourself out. When beginning a new social media video account, first create a 1–2 week backlog of videos so if something happens to disrupt your production flow, you are not immediately behind.

One way to explain this kind of work (for instance to a tenure committee or potential employers) is as public impact. If you can create and sustain an account with a significant audience (or which other academics testify to using in their teaching), then that can boost your profile in a similar way to other public intellectual work like writing op-eds or being quoted in the news.

PUBLIC EXPOSURE

Having a public voice means exposing yourself to public feedback. This is one thing when contact is mediated through editors, and another thing in the world of social media, where comments can be immediate, overwhelming, and uncensored. As GamerGate shows, people of marginalized identities (women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, and disabled people—just to name a few) run a higher risk of negative feedback and even harassment.

It is better to make an informed decision about what risk we are willing to expose ourselves to beforehand than to be blindsided later on. Many faculty may decide this is not worth the potential risk given their unique life situations; however we give advice for online safety later on in this report.

Creating Videos

This section covers general approaches to video creation for social media.

BEGINNING STEPS

We recommend that faculty interested in sharing their expertise through social media video first conduct a survey to see what content is already out there in their discipline. Search keywords related to your area on multiple social media platforms and watch what videos come up.

If you find that there is not much available in your discipline (as was the case for us in local government and criminology research), then you're all set, though you may wish to search at increasing levels of abstraction in order to find some exemplars (see below). If you find that there is a lot of content in your discipline (as was the case for us in media studies and filmmaking), then it's worthwhile to spend some time thinking about how to distinguish yourself and find a unique niche.

In both cases, it is useful to make note of accounts and videos you particularly like. Find permanent links or use a service like 4K Downloader to save the videos for later viewing. This can give you exemplars to inspire you and benchmarks to strive for. If you examine the way the videos are posted, you can identify keywords, hashtags, common ways of describing videos, etc. that work for the social media algorithms in your discipline. It can also help populate a list of people whom—later down the line—you would like to collaborate with.

CONTENT CREATION PROCESS

- **Choose a topic.**
- **Research the topic (if necessary).**
- **Write a script.**
- **Record and/or gather footage.**
- **Edit the video.**
- **Post on social media.**
- **Manage comments**

STYLISTIC APPROACHES

There are two general approaches to creating social media videos:

1. PERSONA-FORWARD

You are on-screen talking direct to camera. This is most common on TikTok, Instagram, and in YouTube shorts, though it can also be seen on YouTube. For an example, consider Milo Rossi (Miniminuteman)'s work on archaeology, environmental science, and pseudo-science debunking.

2. VOICEOVER

The video footage consists of custom art, media clips, stock photography, etc. while you speak off-camera. This style is almost exclusive to longer-form YouTube. For an example, consider Blue (Overly Sarcastic Productions)'s videos on history and philosophy.

Of course, many creators blend these two styles as well. For instance, the well-known creator HBombguy's videos on popular media include both footage of himself talking to the camera and voiceover segments.

In all cases, it is helpful to think of yourself as a character—you are performing a specific persona in your videos, just as you might in the classroom. For instance, media scholar Louisa Stein uses public domain images and footage of Betty Boop to anchor her voiceover in videos analyzing the wide world of Alice in Wonderland, as she did not want to appear on camera.

SOCIAL MEDIA VIDEOS ARE NOT LIKE ONLINE CLASS LECTURES

It is crucial to remember that these videos are very different from traditional online class lectures and presentations. No PowerPoint slide screenshare in a Zoom video here! It's typical to begin with a hook—a surprising fact, question, common misconception, etc. Then, for short-form content, explain one single idea—not a whole lecture. (you can get away with that in long-form content) In both cases, try to keep things moving on the screen—for instance, change camera angles, show diagrams or photographs, occasionally zoom in or out, display key words or sources as text on the screen, or use demonstrations and physical objects. Speak at a conversational level. Incorporating humor is also often a good idea, though of course this will depend on your subject matter. For more serious topics, consider this blog post on "serious TikTok." (Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Divon, 2022)

End each video with a clear takeaway. Depending on your preference, you might follow that takeaway with a call for engagement ("like and subscribe" is a catchphrase on YouTube, for example). It is also good practice to caption your videos, either with tools on the platform (TikTok, Instagram) or by uploading a transcript file (YouTube), as users often watch videos with the sound off.

Remember that people will (ideally) **choose** to watch these videos rather than being required to by the structure of a course (or that they will liven up a traditional lecture). This does not mean giving up on academic rigor, however. Include citations—directly on-screen and/or in the description of the post—though you may use social media vocabulary like "receipts" to refer to them.

Technical Skills

Because both technologies and tools for social media video content creation are continuously changing, rather than give an exhaustive tutorial here we have curated some useful courses and videos from LinkedIn Learning, which all DePaul faculty have access to. These courses (and LinkedIn Learning's content related to online content creation and digital storytelling more generally) should be regularly updated to reflect current software and hardware.

OVERALL PROCESS

DIY Video Production for Content Creators, from Setup to Editing

This class is fairly comprehensive, discussing scripting, production techniques like lighting and audio (focused on an indoor shoot), as well as editing for social media (it uses Da Vinci Resolve, which DePaul faculty do not have free access to, but does discuss other editing software and apps). It could be applied to either short or long-form content.

Reels, Shorts, and TikToks: Telling Engaging Stories with Your Smartphone

This class is fairly comprehensive, discussing scripting principles, production techniques like lighting (though it emphasizes outdoor shooting) and composition, as well as explaining how to caption and hashtag your videos when posting. It is focused on short-form content.

SCRIPTING

"Start with Why" section of Monetizing Content Creation

This section of the course will help you define your goals for creating social media video

See the two scripts included in the appendix of this video for examples of how to format scripts that simultaneously take the audio and video components into account.

FILMING

Telling Your Story on the Web in 60 Seconds

This course introduces a wide variety of social media video types and explains how to create them using Adobe software (which DePaul faculty have access to). This includes video types that are popular on social media and might feel more natural to faculty, like whiteboard videos.

"Shoot Better Videos on Your iPhone" section of Filming Mastery for Short-Form Content: Gear, Tips, and Techniques

If you have an iPhone, this section of the course will demonstrate how to use it to film social media video content that looks and (via connecting to an external microphone) sounds professional.

EDITING

Editing Mastery for Short-Form Content Using CapCut

CapCut is the editing software designed by ByteDance, the company that owns TikTok. It has the advantage of being designed for social media video first

(particularly short-form, vertical video) as well as being simpler to learn than traditional filmmaking software like Adobe Premiere.

POSTING

Understanding Social Media Algorithms for Creators

This course introduces social media algorithms if you are unfamiliar and has some advice for individual platforms.

SEO: Optimize Your Social Media Profiles

This course comes from a marketing perspective but gives strategies for finding relevant keywords that both relate to your content and connect to the platform, as well as how to read the analytics on your account.

WHERE TO GO FOR EQUIPMENT AT DEPAUL

DePaul Library

The library maintains a collection of loanable technology, including cameras, lights, tripods, greenscreens, and microphones. Faculty can borrow these items for up to 4 weeks.



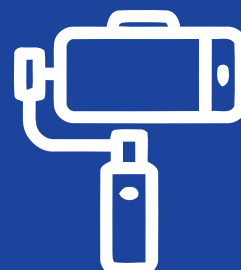
Beta Hub

Run out of the Business School, the Beta Hub is open to all DePaul faculty. It is equipped with a content creation room where you can film in front of a greenscreen, as well as professional microphones, cameras, lighting, and editing software.



Your Phone

Most social media content is made on smartphones. There is something to be said for matching the existing aesthetic and focusing on your ideas, rather than spending time learning new technologies that were largely designed for traditional filmmaking, rather than social media. This is particularly true given editing tools like CapCut designed for the phone.



Protecting Yourself as a Social Media Creator

Below are a few techniques you should use before you begin posting to help secure you against possible future online harassment. This guide was sourced from the Right To Be non-profit and the Activist Doxing Defense Checklist.

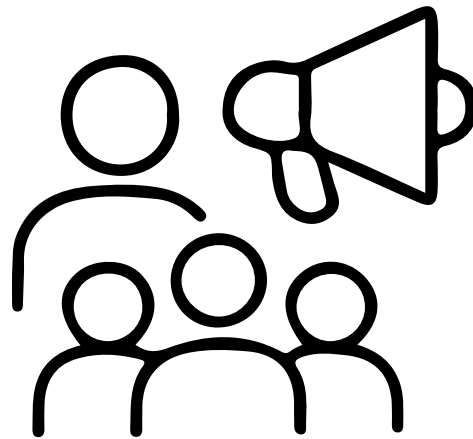
PASSWORDS AND EMAILS

Set up Two-Step Verification on as many of your accounts as possible.

Strengthen your passwords by using an online password manager (1Password, LastPass, KeePass, KeePassDroid, etc) that helps you to create strong passwords and to change them regularly, particularly for important accounts. Make sure not to keep a list of passwords in the cloud (like Dropbox, Google Drive, etc) in case that account is hacked.

For important accounts, audit your passwords to make them more difficult for a computer to guess. You can see how secure a particular type of password is (don't input any of your existing passwords) with this site

Check if your email accounts have been compromised in a data breach with this site and make sure to change passwords related to those emails immediately, though of course consider the recommended paid services with a grain of salt.



DE-DOX YOURSELF

Check if your personal information is publicly available through "people finder" websites like Spokeo, Anywho.com, Intelius, or WhitePages

Ask for sites to remove your listings:

- o Google
- o Bing
- o Spokeo
- o White Pages

You can contract a paid service to monitor whether your information shows up on sites and to delete it when it does. You can see services (like Optery, EasyOptOuts, Reputation.com), their cost, and what sites they will delete information from on the spreadsheet here.

This is another guide for sites that publish personal information and explains how to get your information removed (scroll down for the list)

Set up Google Alerts for your full name and any social media handles you use and use Google's "Results About You" feature to notify you if new information appears.

LOCK PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

While you will typically want the social media accounts you post through to be findable and shareable, personal social media accounts are different. You might also not want your accounts to give permission to third-party apps or to share your location when you post.

Review your social media accounts' privacy settings, particularly:

- o Account privacy/visibility (private profile recommended)
- o Passwords and security (2 factor authentication)
- o Audit your friends & followers list and remove unknown or untrusted accounts
- o Check your login activity and set up alerts for when logins happen
- o Know where blocking, muting, and reporting settings are located
- o Require approval for tags and mentions
- o You might want to use the tool Social Scrub or Block Party to help you keep track.

Works Cited

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Appendix

Social Media Video for Public Engagement

Video Outline, Script, and Production Plan

Prepared by: Jimmy Boratyn
DePaul University, School of Cinematic Arts

1. Video Overview

- **Title / Working Hook:** Why Your Vertical Video Looks Wrong (and How to Fix It)
- **Platform:** TikTok / Instagram Reels
- **Length:** ~30–45 seconds
- **Format:** Talking head with intentional framing variations
- **Audience:** General public, creators, students, non-specialists
- **Purpose:** Demonstrate common vertical video framing mistakes and a simple, practical fix

2. Script (Dialogue)

CU (Hook – correct framing, eye contact)

“Why does your vertical video look wrong, even when the camera is good?”

WS (too far from camera)

“A really common problem is that you’re too far away and not filling the frame.”

CU (eyes clearly off lens)

“Or you’re talking to the screen instead of the camera, which breaks eye contact.”

CU (too much headroom)

“Too much headroom makes your video feel distant and disconnected.”

CU (top of head cut off)

“Cutting off the top of your head feels awkward and distracting.”

Extreme CU (too close to camera)

“And going too close makes it hard to connect at all.”

MCU (correct framing, eye contact - button)

“Instead, fill the frame, keep the camera at eye level, look into the lens, and remember, the bottom of the screen gets covered by buttons and captions, so don’t put anything important down there, keep it in the safe zone.”

3. On-Screen Text / Graphics

- **Shot 3:** “EYE LINE”
- **Shot 4:** “TOO MUCH HEADROOM”
- **Final Shot:** “FILL THE FRAME”

Notes on Text/Graphic Elements:

- Upper half of frame only
- High contrast, bold sans-serif
- 1–2 seconds on screen
- No animation beyond a simple cut or pop-in

4. Shot List

Shot #	Shot Type	Description	Purpose
1	CU	Correct framing, eye contact	Hook
2	WS	Subject too far from camera	Under-framing example
3	CU	Eyes off lens	Eye-line mistake
4	CU	Excessive headroom	Distance issue
5	CU	Top of head cut off	Awkward framing
6	Extreme CU	Face too close to camera	Overcorrection
7	MCU	Proper framing, eye contact	Solution / takeaway

Production Note:

All shots can be captured in one location by adjusting camera distance and height.

5. Feasibility & Production Plan

- Filmed solo
- One location
- No crew
- No external assets
- Minimal editing (straight cuts, no effects)

Designed to be fast, repeatable, and realistic given faculty time constraints.

6. Equipment & Software Needs

Required

- Smartphone (vertical orientation)
- Tripod or stable mount
- Natural light
- Adobe Premiere Pro (or other basic editing software/app, such as FinalCut Pro, CapCut, iMovie, or DaVinci Resolve)

Optional

- Small 3-point LED light Setup
- Lavalier microphone

7. Rationale

This video translates film and media literacy into platform-native communication by demonstrating how professional framing principles shift in vertical, social-first environments.

Affirmational versus Transformational Fandom – Samantha Close

Audio	Video
(marker squeaking)	Me writing "Fan Studies 101 with Dr. ButNoCigar" on a whiteboard, sped up so it goes fast
Ever wonder why some fans are like that	Me talking to camera
Hello	Me in Sherlock Holmes canonical cosplay, reading a copy of the canon, waving to camera (looking to the right)
And some fans are like this	Me talking to camera
Yo	Me in femme Sherlock Holmes cosplay, writing furiously (looking to the left)
In 2009, fan obsession_inc argued that there are 2 sectors of fandom: affirmational fans and transformational fans.	Me talking to camera, citation to the blog post in text on screen
I love this thing SO MUCH, so I want to know everything about it	Text on screen: affirmational fans; Me in canonical cosplay looking to the right
Well, I love this thing SO MUCH, so I want to play with it and make it <i>mine</i> .	Text on screen: transformational fans; Me in femme cosplay looking to the left
Wait, but it's not yours, it's the creator's. Our job is to find out what they were thinking.	Text on screen: affirmational fans; Me in canonical cosplay looking to the right; getting agitated
Yeah, like what were they thinking because these two characters never met, but they'd be perfect together, so I'm writing a story where they bang.	Text on screen: transformational fans; Me in femme cosplay looking to the left, writing furiously
Aaaaaaah!!!! Nooooooooo!!!! Don't touch it, it's perfect!	Text on screen: affirmational fans; Me in canonical cosplay looking to the right; screaming
Mwa ha ha ha	Text on screen: transformational fans; Me in femme cosplay looking to the left, evil laugh
Now, before you get mad, this is a spectrum, not a binary. Most people	Me talking to camera, make gesture of "opening book" when I say

are a mix of both affirmational and transformational fan.	"spectrum" and input a little rainbow following my hands
What kind of a fan are you? Let me know in the comments. Have a burning question about fandom? Ask me, and maybe that'll be the next video!	Me talking to camera, when I say "burning question" hold out my hand and input a little flame burning above it

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