CMGT 597a: Communication Research Practicum I

Instructors:	Ben Lee,	Daniela Baroffio
Office:	ASC 321B	ASC 321C
Office hours:	Tu 4:00-6:00 pm	Tu 9:00-11:00 am, 12:30-2:00 pm
	W 4:30-6:00 pm	Th 9:00-11:00 am, 12:30-5:00 pm
	Th 3:00-5:00 pm	
	and by appointment	and by appointment
Email:	bblee@usc.edu,	baroffio@usc.edu

Course Description

This course lays the foundation for success in your practicum in the Communication Management program. The work you produce in this first 597a class continues into the 597b class in your final semester, together 597ab represent the capstone experience for your degree.

In 597ab, we build on what you have previously learned in your earlier courses, exploring and focusing on a particular topic or problem. We also extend your acquired set of knowledge and skills.

The final product of 597ab may take a number of forms, and you have much discretion to choose. For example, your project may be a(n):
- business plan with some early execution,
- market research and branding campaign collateral,
- consulting analysis plus recommendations,
- training program with accompanying video,
- script and storyboard for a short film, web series, etc.,
- short film etc., shot and exhibited,
- app or mobile site,
- dance and choreography portfolio,
- music album,
- academic research paper, aimed for conference presentation or a Ph.D. application.

The specific product form is only a visible manifestation of an interesting project. So, choose something interesting enough that you can work on for the next two semesters. This freedom to choose is special, unique to 597ab. In other classes, the topics are already defined (e.g., if you take CMGT 556: Global Marketing Communication, you will be learning global marketing communication). In 597ab, you must drive your own study.

You drive your study by seeking to know more about the topics or problems. Hence, the process of knowing will be a major focus in this course. This process is sometimes termed "research" (hence the title of 597ab – research practicum), and you have learned parts of it already. Specifically, you have learned research methods in your CMGT 540 course – how to gather data through different techniques and how to analyze some data. Data, however, is only a part of research. Another part involves finding existing information, knowledge and insight about the topic or problem at hand. These existing sets of knowledge may sometimes

be from past topic-driven courses you have taken and you know where they exist; or they may be unknown to you and you have to find them.

To give you a sense of the sequence surrounding the process of knowing (research), below is a sketch of the more concrete initial steps, framed in the form of questions and actions:

1. What is the interesting topic or problem you want to explore or solve?
2. What you do currently know about this topic/problem? Describe what you know.
3. What do you *not* know about this topic/problem? What do you want to know more?
4. How can you find out more about what you do not know and want to know more? Design a series of systematic tasks to do that.
5. Execute your tasks.
6. If successful, you now know more about your topic/problem. We synthesize our new bits of knowledge. Then, we start to translate what we know more into the next set of tangible actions for our projects.
7. Then, we iterate, and start with Step 2 again.

Organization of Work in Class

The first 597a course meets every week (unless specified) as a class. The class setting allows some sense of community. Your work will be reviewed by your classmates, and you will review your classmates' work. Your peers will be your source of critique, inspiration, and support. Peer review is crucial in this course, and a portion of your grade will depend on how well you review.

When serving as a reviewer for your peer's work, you want to give the same level of attention and care you hope to receive. Make the effort to think through complex questions; be rigorous when review the writing or other content; give feedback in a constructive way; avoid being mindlessly congratulatory.

In terms of organizing for peer review, sometimes you may choose your peer review group, at other times, your group may be assigned by the instructors. The instructors will give more guidance.

Learning Objectives

As noted above, CMGT 597ab is unusual in that it does not specify an area of study but rather prompts you to define what to pursue. Hence, the course's major learning objectives build this capability. So, by the end of the course, you will grow your capacity to tackle complex problems by being able to:
- identify what you know about the problem,
- explore how else you can frame the problem, i.e., what other aspects may be involved,
- craft and execute a plan to gather more data about the problem,
- compile and analyze the data to gain more insights about the problem,
- search general and specialized data bases to find relevant pieces of knowledge that can give more perspective to the problem,
- write summaries of the pieces above, and write syntheses of the summaries

- from collecting and analyzing data plus reading and writing existing pieces of knowledge, generate the next series of moves.

In addition, in terms of communication skills, you will learn how to
- express and explain your thinking and ideas to your peers and instructors,
- give constructive feedback to your peers about their thinking and ideas.

Books and Materials

There is no required material universal to all projects. Be ready to purchase materials relevant to your projects. Some materials may specific to a research technique. For example, if you are conducting focus groups as a way to know more about your topic/problem, then you may need to buy a book on focus groups. Other materials may be specific to the industry about which your problem is situated. For example, if your project involves starting a restaurant, then you likely need books on the restaurant space. Be prepared to spend about $100-$150 on materials. Your instructors will give more guidance.

Other materials maybe compiled and made available to you.

Grading and Evaluation of Performance

This course uses the following grading scale:

A	95% or higher
A-	90%-94%
B+	87%-89%
B	83%-86%
B-	80%-82%
C+	77%-79%
C	73%-76%
C-	70%-72%
D	60%-69%
F	59% or lower

Timing of Grades and Comments, and Response to Comments
The instructors often give comments on assignments before determining a grade, i.e., you receive comments first, grades later. Grading is better done only after the instructors have reviewed every student's assignment, and developed a sense of the collective as well as the individual quality.

In their comments, the instructors often require that you revise and improve on multiple and specific parts of your assignments. You must revise and improve. You may not selectively respond to certain comments and ignore others. Not responding to instructor comments has a very negative effect on your grade. If you do not agree with the instructor's comment you must explain your position well.

Components of the Course Grade

As1	Choose an interesting topic or problem to explore or solve	01%
Pr1	Choose initial peer review group	01%
As2	Describe topic / problem, your current state of knowing - what you wish to have as a deliverable at the end of the capstone courses - what you currently know about the topic/problem - what you do not know about the topic/problem - what you do wish to know more	05%
Pr2	Peer review description of topic / problem	02%
As3	Find out more (I): Data -find out more about what you do not know and wish to know - what research method can you use? focus group, interview, survey, participant observation? - design the specific focus group guide, interview questions, or survey questionnaire, participant observation protocol	08%
As4	Find out more (II): Existing knowledge known by others -search for what others already know and made explicit(e.g., articles, videos) in the various specialized databases, Google Scholar, Google Books, Amazon - compile 30+ relevant pieces of knowledge (an article, a book chapter, a video, etc.) as a list of references formatted in APA reference entry style	05%
Pr3 Pr4	Peer review find-out-more (I) Peer review find-out-more (II)	04%
As5	Collect data based on As3 and analyze data	12%
As6	Read, summarize and synthesize the existing pieces of knowledge Read or review 15 pieces Write summaries (annotated bibliographies) for 5-7 pieces	12%
Pr6	Peer review summaries	02%
As7	Synthesize As5 and As6	20%
As8	Think about and review possibilities for the next series of tasks. The next tasks may be: -collect more and different data -search for more pieces of knowledge to find a conceptual framework to guide further work -translate readings and summaries into a more coherent form (e.g., competitive analysis for the new venture or brand, a literature review for an academic paper) -build an early prototype, app design Design the parts and sequence of the next steps. Start to execute.	20%
	Peer evaluation	04%
	Participation in class	04%

As = Assignment
Pr = Peer review

Criteria for Success

In many ways, this class models after a community of like-minded people who want to learn and grow, an incubator of ideas and effort, coupled with elements of a disciplined professional firm. You are facing three distinct audiences. The first is yourself. Towards yourself, respect your drive to achieve. You chose this class. Its chief characteristic is in offering a space to develop your own ideas. Hence, do not seek the comfortable. The second audience is your peers and your instructors. Towards them, respect their time and effort. The third audience is outside of this class: the person who recommends you for a good opportunity, who hires you as a staff, who funds your venture. Towards them, show quality, creativity, discipline and resilience.

Absences and Late Submission of Work

The instructors recognize that we have multiple commitments and obligations in our lives, and sometimes another obligation requires urgent attention. Or the multiple obligations deplete our energy. So, to accommodate such occurrences, you are allowed one absence from class without penalty, you need not explain the absence, just inform the instructors in advance of the class. Likewise, you are allowed one late submission without penalty

Beyond the first absence or late submission, impressions about your competence, dedication, etc. will worsen. The precise extent of any penalty will depend on the circumstances and your behavior. One key behavior may lessen more severe negative impressions, that is communicating with the instructors and peers early about any problems you are encountering. The instructors can then offer guidance. Know that the instructors do not wish to be overly formulaic with this aspect of the course, and hope to rely on your initiative and commitment instead.

Attention and Mobile Screens in Class

Today every one has at least one mobile screen (laptops, tablets, smartphones), and no doubt they have become indispensable in our everyday lives. However, the screens present significant challenges for a class. Instructors often have to compete with the screen for students' attention, and instructors often lose. So, in order to maintain a fair enough environment for learning, to build respect for each other's time, the instructors will often ask that all screens be put down or closed, and attention focus on the topic or speaker in the front. When such a call is made, please heed.

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Note: Any draft submitted to the instructors is a formal document, subject to the University's policies regarding plagiarism. Plagiarism is not excused for drafts.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the *Department of Public Safety* http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* *http://emergency.usc.edu/* will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Course Overview

Week 01 (August 24)	In Class: - overview of 597ab; philosophy and practice - discuss range and types projects - choose interesting topic or problem (As1) - choose peer review groups (Pr1)
Week 02 (August 31)	Due: Monday August 29, 5:00 pm to instructor and peer reviewers *As2 – Describing topic, current state of knowing In Class: peer review As2 discuss peer review of As2 discuss and prepare for As3
Week 03 (September 7)	In Class: review of library resources by librarian Chimene Tucker discuss and prepare for As3 (continued)
Week 04 (September 14)	Due: Monday September 12, 5:00 pm to instructors and peer reviewers *As3 – Find out more (I) : Data In Class: peer review As3 discuss peer review of As3 discuss and prepare for As4, As5
Week 05 (September 21)	In Class: discuss and prepare for As4, As5
Week 06 (September 28)	Due: Monday September 26, 5:00 pm to instructors and peer reviewers * As4 – Find out more (II) : Existing knowledge known by others * start executing As5 based on As3, i.e., start collecting data In Class: peer review As4 discuss peer review of As4
Week 07 (October 5)	In Class: discuss and prepare for As6

Week 08 (October 12)	In Class: discuss progress of As5, review data findings
Week 09 (October 19)	In Class: discuss progress of As5, review data findings discuss and prepare for As6
Week 10 (October 26)	Due: Monday October 24, 5:00 pm to instructors and peer reviewers * As6 – Annotated bibliographies In Class: peer review As6 discuss peer review of As6 discuss and prepare synthesizing As5 and As6
Week 11 (November 2)	In Class: discuss and prepare synthesizing As5 and As6
Week 12 (November 9)	In Class: discuss and prepare synthesizing As5 and As6 discuss and prepare As8
Week 13 (November 16)	Due: Monday November 1, 5:00 pm to instructors and peer reviewers * As7 – Report synthesis of As5 + As6 In Class: discuss and prepare As8
Week 14 (November 23)	*Thanksgiving eve*, no class
Week 15 (November 30)	In Class: *present As8
Week 16 (December 7)	Due: As8 In Class: *present As8