

Instructor:	Jillian Pierson, Ph.D.	jilliank@usc.edu
Office	ASC 333	Office hours are tentative and subject to change. Feel free
Hours:	Wed 10:00–12:00 T/Th 1:30-2:00	to text to confirm before heading over. If these times are inconvenient for you, we can set
Phone:	(323)610-6820	a meeting for a different time or we can meet by phone. Sometimes talking is much more useful than emailing. As long as you're respectful, I welcome your phone calls.

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### Course Goals

The overall goal of this course is to develop your professional communication skills and knowledge. While we will cover some theory to enhance your understanding of the business world, the bulk of our time will be spent focusing on your applied skills. I would like you to walk out of this class confident that you can deliver excellent presentations; feel comfortable and be successful in interviews; write first-rate cover letters and resumes; and produce effective, clear and correct business writing. You should also have increased awareness of and ability to manage business issues that will affect your work life.

### Required Course Materials

Heath, C. & Heath, D. (2007). *Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die*.  
NY: Random House.

Toogood, G. (2010). *The new articulate executive: Look, act, and sound like a leader*.  
NY: McGraw-Hill.

One other book in its entirety will be assigned to you later in the semester.

Additional readings will be required, mostly available on our Blackboard site.  
Please check Blackboard frequently for postings and updates.

### Course Standards

This course will be as action-packed as you should expect your professional life to be. The requirements of consistent attendance, punctuality and participation are essential to your success. Missing class more than once or twice in the short time we have together is no more acceptable than it would be to miss important workdays at any company. When you have a deadline for an assignment, reading, or a presentation, you must have the work prepared at the very beginning of class. These deadlines will come up often: don't allow yourself to fall behind!

**Here's the fine print. Read it.** Any student who misses more than four classes may fail the course. Please see me immediately if you have missed that number of class meetings. *You must complete all assignments to pass the course.*

## Course Policies

### No laptops or electronics.

In order to create the best possible learning environment, I ask you to please turn your cell phones off when you enter our classroom and to not open your laptops or tablets. I completely understand the temptation to multi-task but I ask that you forgo texting, instant messaging, internet surfing, gaming and other distractions during our time together.

**Late Papers/Assignments:** Please do not ask me for an extension. If your assignment is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for every day it is late, regardless of the reason. Also, please be aware that if you end up handing a paper in late (thus accepting the automatic deduction), it falls to the bottom of my stack of things to do and will most likely not be returned to you in a very timely manner.

**Missed presentations:** We rarely, if ever, have time for “make up” presentations. If you are seriously ill or have a real emergency, I expect to hear from you before class. In most cases you should have already submitted the written components of the assignment to Blackboard. Once you’re feeling better, we can discuss the possibility of scheduling a time for you to deliver your missed presentation (perhaps just to me, one-on-one).

**Participation/Attendance:** Our class sessions combine lecture, discussion and activities. Participation (including attendance, promptness, courtesy, attentiveness, involvement in classroom activities, and discussion that clearly demonstrates you have kept up with the course material) may affect your grade if you fall on a border at the end of the semester.

When you do happen to miss a regular class meeting (with no assignment due), I do not need to hear from you about why you were absent. You should consult with other students to find out what you missed; please do not ask *me*. Once you’ve spoken with your peers, you’re more than welcome to come to me with questions.

**Grading:** To achieve a “C” or better on written assignments, you must write at a level appropriate for a university student, i.e., with correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Your overall grade will be calculated as follows:

Misc homework, quizzes	10%
Business briefing	15%
Informative presentation	15%
Group presentation	20%
Proposal presentation	20%
Informational interview report	20%

I believe a “B” represents really good work. An “A” represents excellent work. If you are disappointed by a grade, I would be happy to discuss your work with you and help you improve for the next assignment. Remember that as a rule, instructors grade based on achievement, not for effort. Begin by following all the instructions for each assignment. Doing so will form the foundation for your success.

Your personal improvement is valued in this class. Even if you already possess superior skills, you should incorporate feedback and make improvements from one assignment to the next. Demonstrations of improvement can positively affect your grade.

### **Info for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodation based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Contact information for DSP is 213-740-0776 and [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu).

### **School of Communication Academic Integrity Policy**

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled: "University Student Conduct Code." See especially Appendix A: "Academic Dishonesty Sanction Guidelines." The policies, procedures, and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty.

It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for a project, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone but yourself. If you have doubts about any of these practices, confer with a faculty member or the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

### **A Note from USC on Stress Management**

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

### **Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**

In case of a declared emergency that makes travel to campus not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

### **Additional Resources**

Please take advantage of some of the resources your tuition supports. Early in the semester, visit The Writing Center for one-on-one assistance or small group workshops. (Email [writing@usc.edu](mailto:writing@usc.edu) or call 213-720-3691.) If you have difficulty with tests, reach out to the Center for Academic Support. (Email [study@usc.edu](mailto:study@usc.edu) or call 213-740-0776.)

### **Tentative Course Schedule, *Subject to Change*:**

	Date	Topic	Assignment Due	Read after class
1	Jan 10	Course Introduction		
	Jan 12	Presentation Boot Camp, Part I		Begin Toogood
2	Jan 17	Presentation Boot Camp, Part II		Continue Toogood
	Jan 19	Presentation Boot Camp, Part III	BB draft reference list	

	Date	Topic	Assignment Due	Read after class
3	Jan 24	Killer Cover Letters and Resumes		Complete Toogood
	Jan 26	Business Briefings	Business Briefing	
4	Jan 31	Networking and developing your 30-Second Pitch		Bb: How to work a career fair
	Feb 2	Graphic Design	Toogood quiz / three design examples	Bb: graphic design examples
5	Feb 7	Resume Clinic	Draft of Job Package—two hard copies	Begin MTS
	Feb 9	USC Career Fair <i>In lieu of a class meeting, you are required to attend the career fair.</i>	Career Fair posting to Bb discussion due by the end of Friday, February 10	Bb: read the discussion postings
6	Feb 14	Business Briefings Revised	Business Briefing with slides	
	Feb 16	Writing for Business		Bb: writing
7	Feb 21	Working in Teams	Informative topic ideas	Complete MTS
	Feb 23	LinkedIn & Interviewing	MTS Quiz	Bb: interviewing
8	Feb 28	Mock Interviews, Round 1	Tell Me About Your Major	Begin group book
	Mar 2	Mock Interviews, Round 2	LinkedIn profile	
9	Mar 7	Informative Presentations	Informative Presentation	Continue group book
	Mar 9	Informative Presentations		book
<i>March 12-19 Enjoy Spring Break!</i>				
10	Mar 21	Crisis Communication		Complete book
	Mar 23	Interactive learning / team meetings		Bb: writing
11	Mar 28	Workplace Persuasion	Completed job package	
	Mar 30	Effective Listening/ team meetings	Persuasive topic ideas	
12	Apr 4	Group Presentation 1/ team meetings		Group 1 Handout
	Apr 6	Group Presentation 2	Finalized proposal topic	Group 2 Handout
13	Apr 11	Group Presentation 3		Group 3 Handout
	Apr 13	Group Presentation 4	Group Presentation Quiz	Group 4 Handout
14	Apr 18	Proposal Presentations	Proposal presentation	
	Apr 20	Proposal Presentations		
15	Apr 25	Proposal Presentations		
	Apr 27	Hit the Ground Running	Quiz on Bb & class content	
	May 9	Informational Interview roundtable during final exam period, 11 am – 1 pm (I know May 9 is somewhat close to graduation. But that's when we will have our final two hours together, so plan accordingly!)		

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

I try to provide as much information as possible in the syllabus about your assignments; check Blackboard for further instructions and examples. Please read all of my directions carefully and always feel free to ask questions.

### **Business Briefing (1-3 minutes)**

For this first introductory presentation, I will provide you with a topic from the world of workplace news. You need to find a *minimum* of three sources on the topic.

Please submit a draft of your bibliography for the presentation as noted on the class calendar.

You will write a modified full sentence outline but you will speak extemporaneously, using a key word outline if you find that helpful. You'll turn in your outlines to me; the modified full sentence outline should have a reference page attached. As a guideline, for such a short presentation, your outline will probably not be any longer than one half of a page.

The first time you deliver this presentation in class will not be graded. I will give you feedback on your outline and delivery. You will then give your business briefing a second time, this time accompanying your presentation with PowerPoint slides. Please upload your slides to Blackboard at least *one half hour* before class and have a back-up in your email or on a data device.

### **Miscellaneous Homework and Quizzes**

#### **Quizzes**

I will give several quizzes, including one for each of the two assigned books. These are not in-depth exams; they are merely a checkpoint to make sure you've done the readings. A third quiz will be based on the student group presentations, and a fourth will cover readings and class discussions. I reserve the right to offer up additional quizzes to make sure you're paying attention in class, especially during your peers' presentations.

#### **Three Design Examples**

Please find three examples of graphic design to bring to class on the assigned day. These could be fliers, advertisements or newsletters.

#### **Career Fair Post to Discussion on Blackboard**

After attending the career fair, please tell the rest of us something about your experience by posting to our Blackboard discussion. Successes, observations, or tips are all welcome.

#### **"Tell Me About Your Major"**

1-2 paragraphs

When at a job interview or networking situation someone asks about your major, what will you say? If you're majoring in communication\*, you had better be prepared to face some skeptics who think your major isn't very substantive.

This is your opportunity to come up with a succinct, specific, impressive statement that is basically a piece of advocacy for your major. Very briefly address what skills, knowledge and experience you gained in your studies.

By skills I definitely do *not* mean that you learned “how to communicate” or how to give presentations. Give the question of what you’ve gotten from your major some serious thought and then write a concise and specific response that would be persuasive to a future employer. Remember to use *details*, not generalizations.

Your reader is an educated person who is unfamiliar with the communication major. As a person unfamiliar with the field, the reader believes the communication major is not rigorous, challenging, or substantive. Your job is to persuade that reader that your major is indeed *rigorous, challenging* and *substantive*. Do not write as if you’re addressing me, your instructor.

\* If you are not a communication major, write the response about your own major. If you are undeclared, pick a major you’re considering. Writing this response should help you decide. Double majors may write about both majors, extending to three paragraphs if necessary. If you have a minor, you probably don’t need to defend it, so there’s no need to write about it here. However, if you want to reference your minor because it supports your major and your career goals, you may incorporate your minor (or minors) as well.

#### Job Package

Your job package will include the following:

- The ad: Find an advertisement for a job you would like to get—and could qualify for—now or in the near future. This should be a career oriented position or internship. (If you’re responding to a job without an ad, provide as much of an official description as possible.)
- Cover letter: This should be tailored to the specific ad you chose. Address the letter to the person who posted the ad and if there was no name listed, see if you can contact the company to find the name of the appropriate person. The content should not repeat what is contained in the resume—it should identify the specific job for which you are applying, highlight the qualifications that make you a good candidate for the position, and end with a strong close.
- Resumé: Your resume is a very personal sales piece. You’ll see a variety of sample resumes in class and should play around with your own until it looks sharp and reads well. The resume should be no longer than one page—two pages are recommended only if you already have extensive professional experience in the field of your choice.
- References: Identify three individuals who would provide positive recommendations for you. Include their names, street and email addresses, telephone numbers, and relationship to you. This is separate from your resume, but should be printed on the same paper, in the same font and style, and with the same heading or letterhead. You would not actually mail this to a potential employer unless they requested references.

During our “resume clinic” you will have the opportunity to get feedback on your resume and cover letter from your peers. Remember that a resume is always a work-in-progress and your cover letters should always be tailored to each ad or situation. By the time you hand in your final package, I do expect your resume and cover letter to be completely free of typos and grammatical errors, just as they must be when you send them to a prospective employer.

#### Mock Interview

Sometimes an interview is just a friendly get-acquainted chat. Sometimes an interview is a grueling challenge. This exercise will help you prepare for whatever comes your way. Round one and round two interviews will be slightly different from one another; you will be interviewed on both days. I do *not* expect interview attire.

#### LinkedIn Profile

After discussing LinkedIn during a class meeting, I will want to make sure that you have an active and current LinkedIn profile.

#### **Informative Presentation (5-7 minutes)**

This informative presentation topic is restricted to something applicable to work life. That gives you a very broad range of possibilities. You should spend time researching something interesting to you that will likely benefit the class as well. Learning more about current business events or “hot topics” in the workplace will help you make conversation at job interviews and networking opportunities, and add to your toolbox for workplace success.

Topics are subject to my approval on a first come, first served with no repeats. We want to listen to topics that truly are *informative*, so please choose one where we will really learn something new.

You will accompany your presentation with PowerPoint slides that enhance the audience’s experience.

I’ll be looking for the following elements, among others: an appropriately narrowed topic, clear organization, a variety of supporting materials (especially stories), use of details, an attention-grabbing introduction and a conclusion that leaves an impact. I’ll also expect you to be confident, make eye contact with the entire audience, speak conversationally, and show interest and enthusiasm.

Please turn in a modified full sentence outline (a well organized *guide*, not a script) that includes a *minimum* of six references.

#### **Group Project**

For this assignment, I will divide the class into four groups. Each group will become a team of consultants that will create a workshop for our class. The group will choose a book that would be relevant to many young professionals, and then present it to the class in an engaging way. Think of your presentation as a training session or a workshop, i.e., you’re educating your audience about what you select from your book. Include at least one exercise or participatory activity for the class to get involved in the material and to help everyone learn or remember the material. Each group

will also post a handout to Blackboard that will serve as notes for the other students on your presentation.

Your group will earn one grade in most cases. However, you will also complete confidential peer evaluation forms that I will take into consideration when assigning individual grades.

### **Proposal Presentation (5-7 minutes)**

In this presentation, you will persuade an employer to adopt a proposal. You need to propose something that will be a “tough sell” to the employer. A tough proposal might be to let all employees work however much or little they want and still get paid the same salary. An easy sell would be to have all employees work from 8 to 6 instead of 9 to 5 for the same salary. Your proposal should be something researchable, in that other companies have done this before.

You can decide who the audience is supposed to represent. Are we the board of a specific major corporation? Or the decision-making team of a fictional, medium sized advertising firm?

You will follow a very specific format in preparing this proposal that targets the employer’s needs. Check Blackboard for the format and for samples.

After you speak, the class (in our fictional role as decision makers) will have a chance to ask you questions while you sit in the “Hot Seat.” We will expect you to be knowledgeable and able to further defend your position.

Some of the elements I will be evaluating are: a clear, appropriately narrowed proposal, demonstrated understanding of audience’s perspective before the proposal is made, variety of verbal support, use of specific details, raising and rebutting potential arguments, and overall persuasiveness.

Please turn in a modified full-sentence outline (a well organized *guide*, not a script) that includes a *minimum* of six references. Use PowerPoint slides if they will enhance your persuasiveness.

### **Informational Interview**

Interview a person who currently holds a job that you would like to hold within about three to five years after graduation. (Maybe you’d like to be the CEO of Disney, but I’m talking about a job you could reasonably expect to hold within a relatively short time frame.) The interview should last around 30-45 minutes. The objectives of this assignment are: (1) to give you insight into the position; (2) to develop your interviewing and self-presentation skills; and (3) to gain experience writing an executive summary. This is *not* an employment interview; so do not ask for a job (although this is a great networking opportunity). Present yourself as a student conducting research regarding future career possibilities.

This should be a face-to-face interview, preferably in your subject’s workplace. If the *only* person who has your dream job is in NY, go for something comparable to your dream job. *Do not do a phone, Skype, email or other mediated interview.*



Please follow these steps for this assignment:

1. Conduct your own research regarding jobs and potential companies that interest you. Gather basic information such as a job description, starting salary, level and type of education required for the position, and specific information regarding the company of interest. Use this information to formulate interview questions. Write up the information you've gathered in an annotated bibliography to be turned in to me along with your executive summary. You should use a *minimum* of three sources, such as newspaper articles, industry blogs, and company web sites. Do note, however, that any information from a company website counts as one source, regardless of how many links within it you've clicked.
2. Contact interview prospects and ask if they could give you about a half hour of their time. Do not interview someone you already know (relatives, friends and their companies are *not* acceptable for this assignment; and do not interview someone in a place you've already worked yourself). If your mother's best friend owns her own public relations company and you've never had the chance to ask her about it, you'll definitely want to talk with her sometime—just not for this assignment!
3. Formulate your interview questions (check Blackboard link for ideas) and re-confirm your interview two days before by phone or email.
4. During the interview, behave professionally. Dress appropriately, in business attire (as appropriate for the industry). Be conscious of the time you've used and do not go over, unless they indicate they wish to continue. Thank them for their time.
5. As soon after the interview as humanly possible, write a thank-you note and mail it to your interviewee. Be sure this brief letter is *grammatically correct and error free!* Before you send it off, make a photocopy or scan or take a picture of it to include when you turn in your assignment. This kind of note is generally neatly hand-written: *no e-mailed thank-you notes*. (Please note that for an employment interview, you would send a more formal thank-you letter printed on stationery.) In your letter, do *not* use the clichéd phrase, "Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule."
6. Write a three-page executive summary about your interview. This report is a professional document in style and content which includes the following topics:
  - description of the industry/product/service
  - description of the position
  - requirements for the position (education, experience, skills)
  - general summary of what you learned, including your own thoughts and reactions

Attach an annotated bibliography to the executive summary. This is like a reference page, only under each citation you'll include a couple of sentences about the information you gathered from that source.

Your total “Interview Package” will consist of:

- Executive Summary (in memo format, addressed to me)
- Copy of your thank-you note
- Annotated bibliography from your pre-interview research in proper reference format (preferably APA style).

### **Electronic Submission of Assignments**

I would like to receive electronic copies of all your assignments—including your PowerPoint slides—on Blackboard.

When you are speaking in class, I need a printed-out copy of your Modified Full Sentence Outline with your reference list. Even though you’re bringing me a hard copy, please also upload a digital one to Blackboard.

I also need you to bring in two hard copies of the job package *draft* for our resume clinic day.

### **Presentation Attire**

I would like to see you present in what I would call “business casual.” What I mean by this is you should look presentable, but I think it’s unreasonable to expect you to spend your day on campus dressed up in formal business attire. Here’s what I absolutely do not want to see on your presentation and interview days: your toes, your midriff, your cleavage, hats, or otherwise distracting clothing.

### **Looking Ahead**

I look forward to working with all of you. I hope you’ll give the class your best and I’ll do the same. Together we’ll make this a very productive semester.