

Instructor:	Jillian Pierson, Ph.D.	jilliank@usc.edu
Office	ASC 333	Office hours are tentative and subject to change. Feel free to text to confirm before heading over.
Hours:	Wed 11:00–12:00 T/Th 1:00-2:00	If these times are inconvenient for you, we can set a meeting for a different time or we can meet by phone.
Phone:	(323)610-6820	Sometimes talking is much more useful than emailing. As long as you're respectful, I welcome your phone calls.

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### **Course Description**

We're good at joking about sex (just google "teen sex comedy"), fear mongering (tweens sexting!) and titillating (pretty much any music video). Where we get awkward is when the conversation gets real. Social science research consistently finds that communication about sex is positively related with all kinds of desirable (pun noted) sexual health outcomes; but culturally and socially created sexual scripts tend to inhibit frank conversations. Incorporating readings, lectures, and discussion, we will engage in an open, research-based conversation about sex and sexuality. We will investigate the ways in which communication and sexuality relate to one another and learn about current research and theory.

### **Course Goals**

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- explain the major concepts, issues and theories in the field of sexual communication
- apply a variety of social science theories to sexual communication
- identify media influences that shape understandings of sex and communication
- describe the challenges communicators face in discussing sex in a variety of contexts
- assess the current state of research in the field of sex and communication
- demonstrate ability to write about and discuss sexuality using the vocabulary of sexual communication scholars

### **Required Course Materials**

All assigned readings will be posted to Blackboard and should be completed prior to class on the day they are listed on the course calendar. The complete biography is at the end of this syllabus.

## **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 think we'll all benefit from focusing without technology. Read the articles I've posted on Blackboard on this topic for a lengthier discussion of this policy. Remember to bring pen and paper to class.

### **Submitting Assignments**

Please use Blackboard to submit all of your assignments. I will rarely ever ask for a "hard copy" of your work, so you don't need to print for this class.

**Late Papers:** If your assignment is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for every day it is late. 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 exams:** Missing an exam is terrible all around. You would never do that unless you were really, seriously ill. Contact me immediately so we can try to remedy the situation and make sure you do not end up with a zero score.

### **Participation/Attendance:**

Our class sessions combine lecture and discussion. Participation (including attendance, promptness, attentiveness, involvement in classroom activities, and discussion that clearly demonstrates you have kept up with the course material) may affect your grade by up to one third of a grade.

Missing more than four class periods *regardless of the reason* may result in a failing grade in the course. While there is no "attendance" grade, you do have to attend regularly in order to pass the class.

There is no need to discuss with me reasons for your absences since it is reasonable that in fifteen weeks, you would have cause to miss one, two or even three classes. If for some reason you suspect you may miss more than four class sessions, see me immediately to discuss whether or not you will need to withdraw from the course.

When you miss class, please do not ask *me* what you missed. It is your responsibility to seek out that information from other students. Once you have done that, I welcome the opportunity to talk with you and to go over any questions.

**Grading:** To achieve a "C" or better on written assignments, you must write at a level appropriate for a university student. Allow yourself time for the writing process of pre-writing, writing, re-writing, revising, and a final proofreading.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Sexpectation paper	10%
Article/Blog paper	15%
“Hot Topic” paper	20%
Final project	15%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	20%

*You must complete all assignments to pass the course.*

I believe a “B” represents really good work. An “A” represents excellent work. A “C” grade should satisfactorily meet all the requirements of an assignment. 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.

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

	Date	Topic	Assignment Due	Read before class
1	Jan 9	Intro to the class		
	Jan 11	A brief history of sex talk	Student Info Sheet	Byers; Carpenter
2	Jan 16	Sexual scripts:		Frith & Kitzinger; La France
	Jan 18	The gendered roles we play		Morgan & Zurbriggen; Vannier & O’Sullivan
3	Jan 23	Sexual norms and behaviors	Sexpectations	Montesi et al 2011&2013 Theiss & Solomon
	Jan 25	Communicating with partners and friends		Busse et al, Holman & Sillars; Quinn-Nilas et al
4	Jan 30	Self-disclosure &		Babin; Coffelt & Hess; Denes; Denes & Afifi
	Feb 1	Privacy management		Anderson, Kunkel & Dennis; Nichols
5	Feb 6	Heteronormativity &		Manning a and b; Utamsingh et al.
	Feb 8	“Coming out”		Venetis et al, Billings et al
6	Feb 13	Hookups &		Fielder et al; Garcia et al, Wentland & Reissing
	Feb 15	Friends with benefits		Bisson & Levine; Epstein et al
7	Feb 20	Negotiating Safe Sex		Broaddus; Earp; Horan; Parker
	Feb 22	Coercion		Collibee; Gutzmer; Katz; Wong; Wright

8	Feb 27	Coercion, Campus &		Bersamin; Littleton
	Mar 1	Alcohol		Flack; Labrie
9	Mar 6	Midterm	Midterm	
	Mar 8	Talking about porn		Klein; Wright
<i>March 11-18 Enjoy Spring Break</i>				
10	Mar 20	Sex in the digital age		Byron, Craft, Dir, Drouin
	Mar 22	Communication in families		Dalenberg, Eisenberg, Kuhle, Martino
11	Mar 27	Sexual health campaigns	“Hot Topics”	Cho; Gurman
	Mar 29	and sex education		Levine; Widman
12	Apr 3	Culture &		Meschke; Liu
	Apr 5	Ethnicity		Noland; Tang
13	Apr 10	Comm among the disabled &		Dune; Gilbert; Peta
	Apr 12	sexual minorities		Kattari; Kosenko
14	Apr 17	Infidelity		Clarke; Mongeau; Thompson; Utley
	Apr 19	Final project presentations	Final projects	
15	Apr 24	Final project presentations		
	Apr 26	Final project presentations		
	May 8	11 – 1 [this date and time are set by the university and cannot be re-scheduled]		

## ASSIGNMENTS

One key to success will be reading all of my directions carefully. Some directions are in this syllabus but more will be given in class and posted on Blackboard. Always feel free to ask questions; I'd much rather clarify expectations in advance than learn afterwards that you didn't fully understand the assignment.

### **Sexpectations** (2-3 page paper)

Our goal for this assignment is to become more critical consumers of sexual information and content provided in pop culture and to consider how those portrayals can affect viewers “in real life.”

Choose an artifact in pop culture that you believe reflects unrealistic or inaccurate portrayals of sex. You will then write a two to three page critique of the artifact in which you will:

1. Briefly introduce the artifact.
2. Describe what specifically is unrealistic or inaccurate.
3. Discuss how the artifact's portrayal could lead to sexual communication issues, insecurities or difficulties.

An artifact could be a scene from a movie, TV show, a music video, or a commercial. (If you'd prefer a different type of artifact, please run your idea by me.) I would like you to include a link to the artifact if possible.

### **Magazine Article or Blog Post** (3-5 page paper)

Your task is to read several readings on one topic and turn them into a blog post or magazine article (of sorts). The idea here is to take the assigned readings from a particular week (tba) and translate them from academic writing into an understandable, engaging article. You should write for an audience of laypeople in an engaging way, drawing out themes from the readings and providing your own reflection (although this is not a place to share personal anecdotes).

### **“Hot Topic” Article or Blog Post** (5-7 page paper)

This is an opportunity for you to learn more about a topic of interest to you, and to then write about it in the format of the article or blog post (as described above). You may choose something we covered in class but didn't get into deeply enough, or you may investigate something new. Your topic is subject to my approval in advance.

You will research the topic using a minimum of five sources. A minimum of two of those sources should be academic sources, i.e., from peer-reviewed journals, so that you are sure to ground your topic in the concepts and theories of the field.

### **Final Project**

In small groups with some class time devoted to work on the project, you will research and create a final project of your choice. The product may be a traditional paper but I would also welcome a sexual health campaign; a film; a website; an educational exercise or even a theatrical experience. The goal here is to continue to add to your knowledge and to put that knowledge to use in a novel way.

We will present these projects in class at the end of the semester.

### **Exams**

The exams in this class will cover readings, lectures and class discussions. Prepare for a challenging series of multiple choice and open-ended, short answer questions.

The final will not be “cumulative” in that you won't have to go back to earlier materials and study them in depth. But your knowledge will build and the final exam questions may reflect that knowledge base.

Remember that you are responsible for both the material presented in the readings and in class. The two do not always overlap. If you missed a class, it would be a good idea to get notes and discuss them with at least two other students.

## **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.

## **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).

## **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.) 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. 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.)

## **Looking Ahead**

Studying communication is an ongoing experience of discovery. I look forward to learning more with all of you this semester.

## COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

### **Week 1 Background**

Byers, S. E. (2011). Beyond the birds and the bees and was it good for you?: Thirty years of research on sexual communication. *Canadian Psychology, 52*(1), 20-28.

Carpenter, L. M. (2001) The ambiguity of “having sex”: The subjective experience of virginity loss in the United States. *The Journal of Sex Research, 38*(2), 127-139.

### **Week 2 Sexual Scripts**

Frith, H., & Kitzinger, C. (2001). Reformulating sexual script theory: Developing a discursive psychology of sexual negotiation. *Theory & Psychology, 11*(2), 209-232.

La France, B. H. (2010). What verbal and nonverbal communication cues lead to sex?: An analysis of the traditional sexual script. *Communication Quarterly, 58*(3), 297-318.

Morgan, E. M., & Zurbriggen, E. L. (2007). Wanting sex and wanting to wait: Young adults' accounts of sexual messages from first significant dating partners. *Feminism & Psychology, 17*(4), 515-541.

Vannier, S. A., & O'Sullivan, L. F. (2011). Communicating interest in sex: Verbal and nonverbal initiation of sexual activity in young adults' romantic dating relationships. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 40*(5), 961-969. doi:10.1007/s10508-010-9663-7

### **Week 3 Partners and Friends**

Busse, P., Fishbein, M., Bleakley, A., & Hennessy, M. (2010). The role of communication with friends in sexual initiation. *Communication Research, 37*, 239-255.

Holman, A., & Sillars, A. (2012). "Talk about “hooking up”": The influence of college student social networks on nonrelationship sex." *Health Communication, 27*, 205-216

Montesi, J. L., Conner, B. T., Gordon, E. A., Fauber, R. L., Kim, K. H., & Heimberg, R. G. (2013). On the relationship among social anxiety, intimacy, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction in young couples. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 42*(1), 81-91.

Montesi, J. L., Fauber, R. L., Gordon, E. A., & Heimberg, R. G. (2011). The specific importance of communicating about sex to couples' sexual and overall relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 28*, 591-609.

Quinn-Nilas, C., Milhausen, R. R., Breuer, R., Bailey, J., Pavlou, M., DiClemente, R. J., & Wingood, G. M. (2016). Validation of the sexual communication self-efficacy scale. *Health Education & Behavior, 43*(2), 165-171.

Theiss, J. A., & Solomon, D. H. (2007). Communication and the emotional, cognitive, and relational consequences of first sexual encounters between partners. *Communication Quarterly*, 55, 179-206.

#### **Week 4 Self-Disclosure and Privacy Management**

Anderson, M., Kunkel, A., & Dennis, M. R. (2011). "Let's (not) talk about that": Bridging the past sexual experiences taboo to build healthy romantic relationships. *Journal of Sex Research*, 48(4), 381-391.

Babin, E. A. (2013). An examination of predictors of nonverbal and verbal communication of pleasure during sex and sexual satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30, 270-292.

Coffelt, T. A., & Hess, J. A. (2014). Sexual disclosures: Connections to relational satisfaction and closeness. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 40(6), 577-591.

Denes, A. (2012). Pillow talk: Exploring disclosures after sexual activity. *Western Journal of Communication*, 76, 91-108.

Denes, A., & Afifi, T. (2014). Pillow Talk and Cognitive Decision-making Processes: Exploring the Influence of Orgasm and Alcohol on Communication after Sexual Activity. *Communication Monographs*, 1-26.

Nichols, W. L. (2012). Deception versus privacy management in discussions of sexual history. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 20(2), 101-115.  
doi:10.1080/15456870.2012.665346

#### **Week 5 Identity and Coming Out**

Billings, A. C., Moscovitz, L. M., Rae, C., & Brown-Devlin, N. (2015). The art of coming out: Traditional and social media frames surrounding the NBA's Jason Collins. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 92(1), 142-160.

Manning, J. (2015a). Communicating sexual identities: A typology of coming out. *Sexuality & Culture*, 19(1), 122-138. doi:10.1007/s12119-014-9251-4

Manning, J. (2015b). Positive and negative communicative behaviors in coming-out conversations. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62(1), 67-97.

Utamsingh, P. D., Richman, L. S., Martin, J. L., Lattanner, M. R., & Chaikind, J. R. (2016). Heteronormativity and practitioner–patient interaction. *Health communication*, 31(5), 566-574.

Venetis, M. K., Meyerson, B. E., Friley, L. B., Gillespie, A., Ohmit, A., & Shields, C. G. (2017). Characterizing sexual orientation disclosure to health care providers: Lesbian, gay, and bisexual perspectives. *Health communication, 32*(5), 578-586.

### **Week 6 Hookups and FWB**

Bisson, M. A., & Levine, T. R. (2009). Negotiating a friends with benefits relationship. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 38*(1), 66-73.

Epstein, M., Calzo, J. P., Smiler, A. P., & Ward, L. M. (2009). "Anything from making out to having sex": Men's negotiations of hooking up and friends with benefits scripts. *Journal of Sex Research, 46*(5), 414-424.

Fielder, R. L., Carey, K. B., & Carey, M. P. (2012). Are hookups replacing romantic relationships? A longitudinal study of first-year female college students. *Journal of Adolescent Health, (52)*, 657-659.

Garcia, J. R., Reiber, C., Massey, S. G., & Merriwether, A. M. (2012). Sexual hookup culture: A review. *Review of General Psychology, 16*(2), 161-176.

Wentland, J. J., & Reissing, E. D. (2011). Taking casual sex not too casually: Exploring definitions of casual sexual relationships. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 20*(3), 75.

### **Week 7 Negotiating Safe Sex & Coercion**

Broaddus, M. R., Morris, H., & Bryan, A. D. (2010). 'It's not what you said, it's how you said it': Perceptions of condom proposers by gender and strategy. *Sex Roles, 62*(9-10), 603-614.

Burnett, A., Mattern, J. L., Herakova, L. L., Kahl Jr, D. H., Tobola, C., & Bornsen, S. E. (2009). Communicating/muting date rape: A co-cultural theoretical analysis of communication factors related to rape culture on a college campus. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 37*, 465-485.

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Gutzmer, K., Ludwig-Barron, N. T., Wyatt, G. E., Hamilton, A. B., & Stockman, J. K. (2016). "Come on baby. You know I love you": African American women's experiences

of communication with male partners and disclosure in the context of unwanted sex. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 45(4), 807-819.

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Katz, J. & Myhr, L. (2008). Perceived conflict patterns and relationship quality associated with verbal sexual coercion by male dating partners. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 23, 798-814.

Parker, K. A., Ivanov, B., & Cohen, E. L. (2016). When politeness is risky: Positive politeness and sexual debut. *Iowa Journal of Communication*, 48(1/2), 145-155.

Wong, D. (2016). 7 reasons so many guys don't understand sexual consent. *Cracked*. <http://www.cracked.com/blog/how-men-are-trained-to-think-sexual-assault-no-big-deal/>

Wright, M. O., Norton, D. L., & Matussek, J. A. (2010). Predicting verbal coercion following sexual refusal during a hookup: Diverging gender patterns. *Sex Roles*, 62(9-10), 647-660.

### **Week 8 Campus sex; alcohol use.**

Bersamin, M. M., Zamboanga, B. L., Schwartz, S. J., Donnellan, M. B., Hudson, M., Weisskirch, R. S., & Caraway, S. J. (2014). Risky business: Is there an association between casual sex and mental health among emerging adults? *Journal of Sex Research*, 51(1), 43-51.

Flack, W. F., et al. (2007). Risk factors and consequences of unwanted sex among university students: Hooking up, alcohol, and stress response. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22, 139-157.

Labrie, J. W., Hummer, J. F., Ghaidarov, T. M., Lac, A., & Kenney, S. R. (2014). Hooking up in the college context: The event-level effects of alcohol use and partner familiarity on hookup behaviors and contentment. *Journal of Sex Research*, 51(1), 62-73.

Littleton, H., Tabernik, H., Canales, E., & Backstrom, J. (2009). Risky Situation or Harmless Fun? A Qualitative Examination of College Women's Bad Hook-up and Rape Scripts. *Sex Roles*, 60(11), 793-804.

### **Week 9/10 Social Media; Porn**

Bergdall, A. R., et al. (2012). Love and hooking up in the new millennium: Communication technology and relationships among urban African American and Puerto Rican young adults. *Journal of Sex Research*, 49, 570-582.

Burkett, M. (2015). Sex(t) talk: A qualitative analysis of young adults' negotiations of the pleasures and perils of sexting. *Sexuality & Culture*, 19(4), 835-863.

Byron, P., Albury, K., & Evers, C. (2013, May). "It would be weird to have that on Facebook": young people's use of social media and the risk of sharing sexual health information. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 21(41), 35-44.

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### **Week 10 Comm in Families**

Dalenberg, W. G., Timmerman, M. C., Kunnen, E. S., & Van Geert, P. L. (2016). Young people's everyday romance and sexual experiences in relation to sex-related conversations with parents: a diary study in the Netherlands. *Sex Education*, 16(6), 692-706.

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Kuhle, B. X., Melzer, D. K., Cooper, C. A., Merkle, A. J., Pepe, N. A., Ribanovic, A., . . . Wettstein, T. L. (2015). The "birds and the bees" differ for boys and girls: Sex differences in the nature of sex talks. *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences*, 9(2), 107-115.

Martino, S. C., Elliott, M. N., Corona, R., Kanouse, D. E., & Schuster, M. A. (2008). Beyond the "big talk": The roles of breadth and repetition in parent-adolescent communication about sexual topics. *Pediatrics*, 121(3), e612-e618.

### **Week 11 Sexual Health Campaigns**

Cho, H. & Salmon, C.T. (2007). Unintended effects of health communication campaigns. *Journal of Communication*. 57, 293-317.

Gurman, T.A., & Underwood, C. (2008). Using media to address adolescent health: Lessons learned from abroad. In J.D. Brown (Ed.). *Managing the media monster: The influence of media (from television to text messages) on teen sexual behavior and attitudes* (pp. 40-83). Washington, D.C.: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

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### **Week 12 Culture and Ethnicity**

Liu, M. (2012) Speaking the unspeakable: an exploratory study of college women's sex communication in Shanghai, China, *Asian Journal of Communication, 22:2*, 197-213,

Meschke, L., & Dettmer, K. (2012). 'Don't cross a man's feet': Hmong parent–daughter communication about sexual health. *Sex Education, 12*(1), 109-123.

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Tang, N., Bensman, L., & Hatfield, E. (2013). Culture and sexual self-disclosure in intimate relationships. *Interpersona, 7*(2), 227-245.

### **Week 13 Sexual Minorities**

Dune, T., & Shuttleworth, R. (2009). "It's Just Supposed to Happen": The Myth of Sexual Spontaneity and the Sexually Marginalized. *Sexuality and Disability, 27*(2), 97-108.

Gilbert, G., Clark, L., & Anderson, M. (2012). Do deaf individuals' dating scripts follow the traditional sexual script? *Sexuality & Culture, 16*(1), 90-99.

Kattari, S. (2015). "Getting It": Identity and Sexual Communication for Sexual and Gender Minorities with Physical Disabilities. *Sexuality & Culture, 19*(4), 882-899.

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**Week 14 Infidelity**

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Utley, E. A. (2017). Infidelity's coexistence with intimate partner violence: An interpretive description of women who survived a partner's sexual affair. *Western Journal of Communication, 81*(4), 426-445.

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### **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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. 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>.

### **Support Systems:**

*Student Counseling Services (SCS)* - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

<https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

*Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)* - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance* – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.

<https://equity.usc.edu/>

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

*Student Support & Advocacy* – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

*Diversity at USC*

Tab for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>